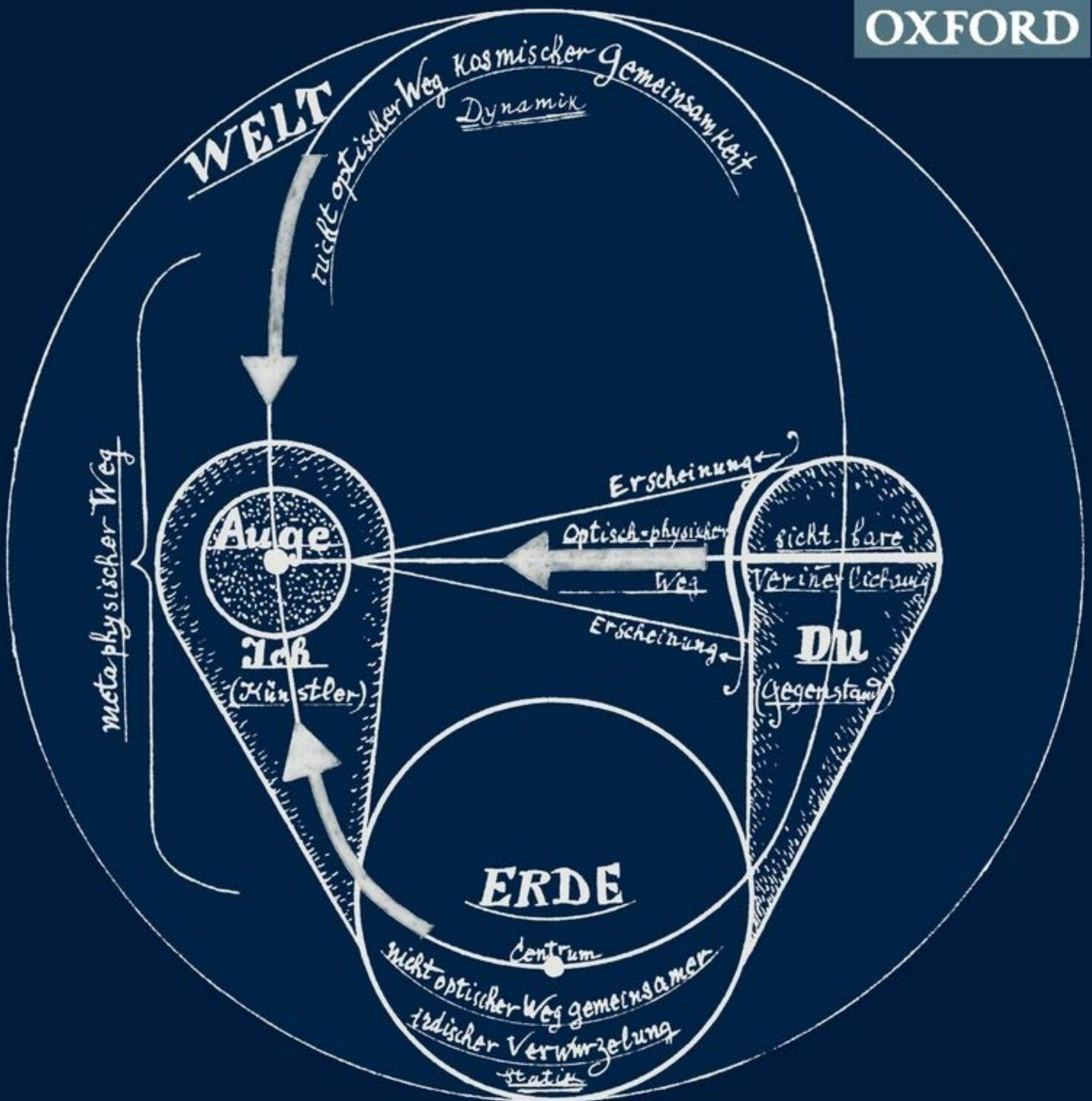


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Transcendental Arguments and Scepticism

ANSWERING THE QUESTION
OF JUSTIFICATION

Robert Stern

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The sceptical idealist . . . who . . . challenges the ground of our assertion and denounces as insufficiently justified our conviction of the existence of matter, which we thought to base on immediate perception, is a benefactor of human reason in so far as he compels us, even in the smallest advances of ordinary experience, to keep on the watch, lest we consider as a well-earned possession what we perhaps obtain only illegitimately.

(Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A377-8)

Is our confidence justified?—What people accept as a justification—is shewn by how they think and live.

(Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, § 325)

Introduction

'All the advantages of theft over honest toil'. That is how, several years ago, someone once characterized transcendental arguments to me, reflecting a widespread conviction that there is something vaguely disreputable or even dishonest about them. This suspicion is fuelled by many sources: difficulties in giving a full definition of what a transcendental argument is and how it differs from other arguments; disappointed hopes regarding what they can really achieve; doubts about their respectability from a naturalistic perspective; a conviction that their apparent goal of refuting scepticism is one that they seem to achieve too easily; or a feeling that, when looked at in any detail, they often rest on dogmatic and unsubstantiated claims that beg too many questions to really satisfy anyone who is not already committed to them.

It is my hope that many of these understandable concerns will be addressed in what follows. But it is important to see that it would be wrong to exaggerate them. It may be hard to give a brief and satisfactory definition of a transcendental argument: but examples of them are easy to recognize and are generally agreed upon without any difficulty. It may be that transcendental arguments should be viewed less optimistically than in the 1960s and 1970s, when P. F. Strawson's powerful reading and reconstruction of Kant made them suddenly in vogue; but whilst much of the theorizing *about* transcendental arguments has come to an end, they still continue to be used, most recently and prominently by Hilary Putnam, Donald Davidson, and John Searle. It may be that someone committed to a strongly naturalistic programme in philosophy will be suspicious of transcendental arguments; but such suspicions are not worth much if they are merely programmatic and hardly cast doubt on transcendental arguments alone. It may be that the claim to have refuted scepticism using transcendental arguments is premature and too easy; but it could also be said that the proponent of transcendental

arguments takes the problem more seriously and deeply than do many of those who have offered other responses to this issue. And finally, it may be that transcendental arguments are often just sketched but hard to spell out in detail; but the same might be remarked of most philosophical claims and positions. What is more, we should perhaps be cautious in thinking we can just dismiss transcendental arguments on these grounds without further ado, for it is possible (as someone else once observed to me) that, without arguments of this form, philosophy can be nothing more than a meta-discipline, as its distinctive conclusions and methodology would be lost.¹ In this way, I believe, those of us who have what Strawson has called ‘a tenderness for transcendental arguments’ have nothing in particular to apologize for.^{1,2}

As far as I know, this is the only monograph in English to have been published on the topic of transcendental arguments (although, of course, they have been widely discussed in papers and articles).³ I have tried to bear this fact in mind when writing the book, assuming that as a result some may come to it in order to find a way into the issues and to understand the central uses of these arguments in Kant, Strawson, Davidson, Putnam, and others. I have therefore attempted to put points as clearly as possible; to signpost debates and different approaches; and to avoid presuming too much background knowledge on the part of the reader. This book is not,

¹ Cf. the remark by Hector-Neri Castañeda, that ‘every philosophical claim is to the effect that something or other is necessary or impossible, or a priori or empirical, and often the necessity in question is not formal logical necessity’ (Hector-Neri Castañeda, ‘Consciousness and Behaviour: Their Basic Connections’, in Hector-Neri Castañeda (ed.), *Intentionality, Minds and Perception* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1967), 121-58, p. 122).

² P. F. Strawson, *Skepticism and Naturalism: Some Varieties* (London: Methuen, 1985), 2i-

³ The only works in English I know of which come close are R. J. Benton, *Kant’s Second Critique and the Problem of Transcendental Arguments* (Dordrecht: Nijhoff, 1977), and Humphrey Palmer, *Presupposition and Transcendental Inference* (London and Sydney: Croom Helm, 1985), though the former is largely interpretative in focus, and the latter is more concerned with ‘presumptive circularity’ in general, where transcendental arguments are taken to involve such circularity. The only non-English monograph I have come across is Marcel Piquet’s *Transzendente Argumente: Kant, Strawson und die sinnkritische Aporetik der Detranszendentalisierung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991); there is also an extensive discussion in Reinhold Aschenberg’s *Sprachanalyse und Transzendentalphilosophie* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1982). A full bibliography of writings on transcendental arguments (compiled by Isabel Cabrera) can be found in Robert Stem (ed.), *Transcendental Arguments: Problems and Prospects* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 307-21.

however, an ‘objective’ overview of the literature or an introduction to it: rather, it offers a partisan contribution to the debate, in trying to show where others have gone wrong and to point to a solution to the difficulties surrounding transcendental arguments in their relation to scepticism.

The aim of this book is therefore to provide an account of what transcendental arguments are, to examine what epistemological and metaphysical commitments they involve, and to critically assess their philosophical value. The aim of this introduction is to characterize in general terms the approach that will be adopted in what follows.

0.1 TRANSCENDENTAL ARGUMENTS AND SCEPTICISM

As the title of this book suggests, I will be focusing exclusively on ways in which transcendental arguments are used in the context of scepticism, and as a result I will be dealing solely with their epistemological applications. I do not dispute that a broader use of transcendental arguments is possible, in metaphysics, political philosophy, or ethics, for example; but for both historical and philosophical reasons I think we have most to learn from such arguments in epistemology.

The historical case is straightforward. While examples of transcendental arguments can perhaps be found in the philosophical literature prior to Kant, it is clearly Kant who made such arguments into a primary methodological device in constructing his philosophical system, for which epistemological issues were central. And since Kant, those who have used and revived such arguments in modern philosophy have also been concerned to do so in a way that addresses largely epistemological questions. It is only more recently, perhaps since the difficulties of using transcendental arguments in this way have emerged, that the assumption has been questioned that ‘the point of transcendental argument in general is an anti-skeptical point’;⁴ but, it is only once the relation between transcendental arguments and epistemology has been thought through that the rationale for this apostasy can be grasped.

⁴ Strawson, *Skepticism and Naturalism*, io; cf. also p. 21.

The philosophical case for focusing on transcendental arguments in relation to scepticism may appear equally straightforward. Transcendental arguments, after all, are widely supposed to offer some sort of *refutation of* scepticism, making the connection obvious. However, while this promise will immediately attract some, it will also repel many, either because they are philosophically knowing enough to realize in advance that any such refutation is unlikely to succeed, or because they are philosophically sophisticated enough to think that no such refutation is ever really required, for this is to take scepticism more seriously than it deserves. Now, in subsequent chapters, my aim in part will be to show that such misgivings are misplaced, first because the sceptical position which transcendental arguments can be used to address does not *have* to be the seemingly impregnable fortress of Cartesian doubt, and secondly because such non-Cartesian varieties of scepticism have implications that make them harder to ignore and dismiss out of hand.⁵ In presenting the sceptical target in this way, therefore, it will perhaps be less easy to claim that transcendental arguments merely encourage us to engage further in a hopeless and philosophically empty quest.

None the less, where I am happy to concede something to these concerns is in allowing that, where sceptical worries exist, we have more to learn by trying to understand where they come from, and what appears to give them life, than by simply trying to address them head on, and overturn them. I therefore accept that (in Thompson Clarke's words) the sceptic's target is 'the product of a large piece of philosophizing about empirical knowledge done before he comes on stage',⁶ and that therefore the most fruitful way of dealing with him may not be to set out to refute him, by answering him in his own terms, but rather to question those terms themselves. In the light

⁵ In using the label 'Cartesian' here, I do not mean to be talking about the position of Descartes himself, but about a particular conception of scepticism (as requiring certainty or the impossibility of doubt) that has come to be labelled in this way, even though Descartes's own handling of sceptical issues is considerably more nuanced than this implies. Because I do not think Descartes's actual position corresponds to the 'textbook' position, I will switch from talking of 'Cartesian scepticism' to talking of 'epistemic scepticism', once the latter terminology is properly introduced (in Ch. 1).

⁶ Thompson Clarke, 'The Legacy of Skepticism', *Journal of Philosophy*, 69 (1972), 754-69, p. 754. Cf. also John McDowell, *Mind and World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994), it3: 'The aim here is not to answer sceptical questions, but to begin to see how it might be intellectually respectable to ignore them, to treat them as unreal, in the way that common sense has always wanted to.'

of this view of the anti-sceptical project, however, can transcendental arguments be given a role, if the aim now is not to answer scepticism, but to show how and why it should be set aside, together with the philosophical outlook that has nurtured it?

I believe they can, and that in fact transcendental arguments have always had this diagnostic element as part of their response to the sceptical challenge: namely, of demonstrating the artificiality of the constraints within which the sceptic is working, and which he has inherited from the epistemological tradition of which he is part. In overturning scepticism, therefore, a transcendental argument properly conceived is not meant to establish some truth that otherwise we would not be sure of, but (more negatively) to undercut the ‘large piece of philosophizing’ on which the sceptical position is built, but which the sceptic leaves unquestioned. It is in thereby turning the game played by scepticism against itself (to paraphrase Kant⁷) that transcendental arguments make their real contribution to our *understanding* of scepticism, by showing that the sceptic relies on certain philosophical assumptions to get his doubt going; these assumptions are then shown to involve a conception that is too impoverished to make a coherent beginning, but which, when enriched, leads the sceptical problem to disappear. Although they do indeed engage with scepticism, and although they do indeed take sceptical problems seriously, proponents of transcendental arguments may none the less allow that this project is valueless, unless it scrutinizes and rejects the philosophical picture that made such engagement seem necessary at all.

Taken in this way, it can then be seen why it is no mere historical accident that Kant was the first to employ transcendental arguments against scepticism. For, in his crucial encounter with Hume, Kant (rightly or wrongly) took himself to be dealing with a sceptic, and one whom he took (again, rightly or wrongly) to have arrived at that scepticism as the logical conclusion of the theories of his empiricist predecessors. Kant therefore saw that to refute

⁷ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan, 1933), B276. References to the *Critique* will be given in the standard form, relating to the pagination of the A (first) and B (second) editions. References to works of Kant other than the *Critique of Pure Reason* will be to volume and page number of the Akademie edition (*Kant's gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Deutsche [formerly Königliche Preussische] Akademie der Wissenschaften, 29 vols. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1902-)), together with a reference to a standard English translation (where available).

Humean scepticism it was more effective to undermine the empiricist presuppositions on which this scepticism relied, than simply to show that Hume's sceptical conclusions were false. Faced by a kind of 'living' scepticism in this way, Kant's arguments therefore take on a kind of diagnostic and dialectically sophisticated character that is missing in many 'textbook' refutations of scepticism, and even in many 'textbook' presentations of transcendental arguments themselves.

0.2 THE NATURE OF TRANSCENDENTAL ARGUMENTS

As standardly presented, transcendental arguments are usually said to be distinctive in involving a certain sort of claim, namely that 'For Y to be possible, X must be the case', where Y is some indisputable fact about us and our mental life (e.g. that we have experiences, use language, make certain judgements, have certain concepts, perform certain actions, etc.), but where it is left open at this stage exactly what is substituted for X . Thus, whether and how far a transcendental claim is to be used to address sceptical issues, and what sorts of sceptical issues these are, is not determined by the nature of the claim *as such*, but by what one substitutes for X . What conclusions one can get to in making a claim of this form, and what one needs to do to substantiate it, are therefore closely related: the stronger the former, the more demanding the latter. The question as regards scepticism therefore becomes: can one find adequate grounds on which to substantiate a transcendental claim that is itself strong enough to do any real anti-sceptical work? As we shall see in what follows, this is not so easy to determine as is sometimes assumed, as there are different kinds of sceptical target, and different strategies against them may require distinct kinds of transcendental claim. On this general definition of a transcendental claim, therefore, it is not *intrinsically* anti-sceptical, as one could use it to show that there is something that is a necessary condition for experience etc. without thereby establishing anything that can really be used against the sceptic; on the other hand, nothing in the definition rules out the possibility that such a claim can be defended in such a way as to show that scepticism (of some sort) is mistaken.

In making the notion of a transcendental claim central in this way, it becomes clear that there is something ambiguous in the term ‘transcendental argument’: it can be applied either to an argument with a transcendental claim as a *premise*, or to the argument used to establish the transcendental claim as a *conclusion*. Generally speaking, those who have understood transcendental arguments to be directly anti-sceptical have used the term in the first way, as having a transcendental claim as a premise and a conclusion which refutes the sceptic’s position. On the other hand, those who have taken them to be (at best) only indirectly anti-sceptical have used transcendental arguments to *establish* a transcendental claim, which they then exploit as part of a more general epistemological strategy. I do not wish to prejudge here what is the best way of using a transcendental claim, as this will be at issue in what follows.

Many of these difficulties and ambiguities in defining what is meant by a transcendental argument of course go back to Kant: for, while he himself rarely employed the term ‘transcendental argument’,⁸ and mostly spoke instead of ‘transcendental deduction’, ‘transcendental exposition’, and ‘transcendental proof’, he both formulated the central examples of such arguments, and used them within a more general philosophical framework to which their exact relation is unclear, and which itself is hermeneutically unstable, particularly in relation to the very question transcendental arguments are supposed to address, namely scepticism. As a result, whilst some have argued that we can only get at the real nature of transcendental arguments by going through Kant and understanding his own epistemological outlook, others have sought to go round him, arguing that there is nothing particularly Kantian about transcendental arguments as such, and that they can be happily adopted within different (and

⁸ Cf. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A627/B655. It should be noted that, though Kant does use the term ‘transcendental argument’ here, it refers to an argument that goes beyond the limit of the legitimate employment of the understanding, and hence is not properly an instance of what is now meant by the term. One of the earliest uses of the term in its current sense is in J. L. Austin’s paper ‘Are There A Priori Concepts?’, which appeared in the *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 18 (1939), 82-105. As Christopher Hookway has pointed out, an even earlier use can be found in C. S. Peirce’s *Minute Logic* of 1902: see Christopher Hookway, ‘Modest Transcendental Arguments and Sceptical Doubts: A Reply to Stroud’, in Robert Stern (ed.), *Transcendental Arguments: Problems and Prospects* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 173-88, p. 180 n. 8.

allegedly more coherent) kinds of epistemological and metaphysical framework (from Humean naturalism to a priori rationalism).

Again, I hope to remain neutral about this issue at this stage. Thus, the only way in which my characterization of a transcendental argument so far is particularly indebted to Kant is in saying that the necessary conditions should relate to how experience (which for Kant includes our beliefs, judgements, and systems of concepts) is possible. Kant also makes this definitive: 'In transcendental knowledge, so long as we are concerned only with concepts of the understanding, our guide is the possibility of experience.'⁹ There is nothing about this that commits one to anything particularly Kantian, however: it is just that, by determining the necessary conditions for the possibility of experience in this way, we are starting with something which the sceptic cannot deny is actual, and therefore possible, so that our starting-point does not require any further justification.

We may also perhaps handle a further defining feature of a transcendental argument in a similar spirit: namely, that in claiming that *X* is a necessary condition for the possibility of experience, we are not taking this to be a matter of causal or natural necessity. If we take as our target the Cartesian sceptic, there are clearly two good reasons for this. First, although our observation of the world might suggest that experience has certain necessary causal conditions (e.g. light and sound must be transmitted between particular wavelengths), we can hardly use such considerations against a sceptic of this sort, for whom all such empirical knowledge is in question, and against whom we are therefore required to adopt a position that is less open to doubt in this way. Secondly, if we permit the transcendental claim to be made on the basis of natural necessity, then this allows that there are possible worlds (for example, where the laws of physics do not hold) in which this claim is false, again opening us up to the sceptical challenge of showing that we are not in such a world. However, even leaving the Cartesian sceptic aside, we may still want to make it definitive of transcendental arguments that their modal commitment is stronger than merely natural necessity. For, first, if we are to take it that there is something distinctively *philosophical* in making a transcendental claim, which moves us outside the realm of science into a form of non-empirical inquiry (as

⁹ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A783/B811.

many have supposed), then the necessity in question had better not be of a kind that we can use scientific methods to establish. And secondly, if we aim to use transcendental arguments to overturn the ‘large piece of philosophizing’ on which scepticism is built, such philosophizing can rarely be overturned through empirical considerations, but will require conceptual arguments to show that it is incoherent, and on what grounds.

This then raises a familiar Kantian issue, of whether in taking ‘if there is experience, then *X* is the case’ to be more than merely naturally necessary, this kind of claim should be treated as analytic or synthetic a priori. At this point, it is easy to get bogged down in the vagaries of Kant’s terminology, or in questioning his view of the analytic/synthetic distinction. As I see it, however, the problem here is not really specifically Kantian, but goes back to Leibniz and beyond, and rests on two related questions: first, is what *makes* the transcendental proposition *necessary* that it is reducible to a *logical* truth by definitional substitution, so that its opposite is a contradiction and its modal status derives from the laws of logic (analyticity as *rationes essendi*)?; and secondly, is what enables us to *know* that the proposition is necessary some sort of conceptual inquiry into the meaning of the terms involved (analyticity as *rationes cognoscendff*)! The issue then becomes: if we accept that our basis for asserting a transcendental claim can only ‘consist in certain ways of assembling facts about meanings’¹⁰ (making it analytic in the epistemic sense), must we also accept that its necessity is grounded only in what is logically possible (making it analytic in the ontological sense), or can this form of conceptual analysis give us insight into modal truths that constitute neither natural nor logical constraints, but something in between, such as *metaphysical* limitations on what is possible? So, for example, it might be said that, though we know that nothing can be red and green all over as a result of a certain sort of conceptual analysis, this does not constitute any sort of *logical* impossibility, but only a metaphysical one, as to deny it is not to assert a logical contradiction. Again, it is not clear that we are committing ourselves to anything particularly Kantian in taking a transcendental claim to be distinctive in *raising* this issue (thereby ruling out as not transcendental obviously analytic propositions such as ‘if *x*

¹⁰ Jonathan Bennett, *Kant’s Analytic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 44–

is a cat then x is an animal'), whilst it would seem premature to suppose that Kant's specific approach is somehow uniquely qualified to deal with it.

We may therefore settle on a fairly broad characterization of a transcendental argument as involving a transcendental claim of the form 'X is a necessary condition for the possibility of experience, language, thought, etc.', where the *rationes cognoscendi* of this claim is non-empirical, and the *rationes essendi* is not that it is analytically true or true by virtue of the laws of nature. Given that we have left the specification of the necessary condition (X) open, four general types of transcendental argument may then be distinguished:¹¹ *truth-directed* transcendental arguments, *belief-directed* transcendental arguments, *experience-directed* transcendental arguments, and *concept-directed* transcendental arguments. These may be defined as follows:

(i) A is a *truth-directed* transcendental argument, where X is specified as some non-psychological fact or state of affairs which is claimed to be a necessary condition for experience, language, etc.

e.g. For experience to be possible, there must be physical objects.

(2) A is a *belief-directed* transcendental argument, where X is specified as some belief which is claimed to be a necessary condition for experience, language, or some other belief(s), etc.

e.g. For individuals to have beliefs about their own mental state, they must believe that there is an external world.

(3) A is an *experience-directed* transcendental argument, where X is specified as a way in which things must be experienced as being

" I have here adapted and added to terminology used by Christopher Peacocke and Quassim Cassam. Cf. Christopher Peacocke, *Transcendental Arguments in the Theory of Content* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 4, and Quassim Cassam, *Self and World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 33. More recently, Cassam has used the terminology of *world-directed* transcendental arguments to label the first category; although I have chosen to use the earlier terminology of truth-directed transcendental arguments, the characterization is equivalent: cf. Quassim Cassam, 'Self-Directed Transcendental Arguments', in Robert Stern (ed.), *Transcendental Arguments: Problems and Prospects* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 83-1 to, p. 83: 'Some arguments of this [transcendental] form are *world-directed*. They start with the assumption that there is thought or experience of some particular kind, and argue that for thought or experience of this kind to be possible, the world in which these thoughts or experiences occur must be a certain way. World-directed transcendental arguments are generally intended as anti-sceptical, since the necessary conditions which they purport to uncover include the truth of propositions which have been called into question by familiar forms of scepticism.'

or appear to be, as a necessary condition for having experience of another kind, or language, beliefs, etc.

e.g. For individuals to have subjective sensations or feelings, they must have experience as of an external world.

(4) *A* is a *concept-directed* transcendental argument, where *X* is specified as a context in which a concept-user must have acquired the capacity to employ the concept *C*, as a necessary condition for acquiring the capacity to apply the concept *C* at all.

e.g. For individuals to have learnt how to apply the concept 'pain', they must have acquired the capacity to apply that concept to others as well as themselves.

Other varieties are possible, but these four constitute the main classes of transcendental argument to be discussed in what follows, and which are found in the literature.

Now, my aim in the subsequent discussion is to consider in what ways, if any, these forms of transcendental argument (or claim) can be made to work against various forms of scepticism, bearing in mind what we have already observed concerning the dialectics of the situation: namely, if we make the transcendental claim too strong, it may be hard to substantiate, whilst if we make it too weak, it may do too little damage to the sceptic's position. It seems obvious that (1) is the strongest claim, so it will face the former problem, whilst the move through (2) to (4) makes the claim weaker, so these will face the latter problem. If, then, (1) proves too hard to substantiate, but (2), (3), or (4) prove too weak, then our conclusion must be that transcendental arguments lack any real value against the sceptic; I hope, however, that if we are sufficiently careful regarding our characterization of scepticism and its varieties, and the different kinds of strategy required to address these varieties, this dilemma can be resolved.

0.3 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

The plan of the book is as follows. In Chapter 1, I will look more closely at the kinds of sceptical target that transcendental arguments may be used to address, emphasizing a distinction between what I call *epistemic* and *justificatory* scepticism, and also between what I call *reliabilist* justificatory scepticism and *normativist* justificatory scepticism. In Chapter 2, I will consider the now-standard objections that

have been made to transcendental arguments in their truth-directed form. In Chapter 3, I will consider how far the forms of scepticism distinguished in Chapter 1 require to be met by truth-directed transcendental arguments, and whether some might be met by transcendental arguments of the belief-directed, experience-directed, or concept-directed type. In Chapters 4 to 6, I will turn to consider three sceptical problems raised by the justificatory sceptic (concerning the external world, causality, and other minds), and will try to show how here belief-directed, experience-directed, and concept-directed transcendental arguments can be used respectively, in such a way as to avoid the standard objections, whilst also having some real anti-sceptical force. In this way, I hope, something of positive value may emerge from our inquiry.

I will not be proposing any transcendental arguments of my own in what follows. Rather, my primary aim is to look at the canon of transcendental arguments we actually have (such as Kant's Refutation of Idealism and Second Analogy, Strawson's interpretation of Kant's Transcendental Deduction in *The Bounds of Sense* and his discussion of scepticism regarding other minds in chapter 3 of *Individuals*, Putnam's attempted refutation of brain-in-a-vat scepticism in chapter 1 of *Reason, Truth and History*, and Davidson's defence of the claim that beliefs are by nature generally true), and to consider how these exemplars in fact differ in what they set out to establish, the assumptions on which they rest, and the broader philosophical frameworks they employ. The hope is thus to show that transcendental arguments need not be used or conceived of in only one way, and that whilst in some of their uses they might face overwhelming objections, in others they do not involve making moves or claims that invite such criticisms, thereby showing how transcendental arguments ought properly to be handled if they are to be made effective. This will involve some interpretative discussion, as I will suggest that in some cases the philosophically most powerful way to understand a particular argument is not the one normally proposed; none the less, I hope to show that in these cases my account of the argument does justice to many (if not all) aspects of the texts discussed and to some (if not all) of their authors' intentions and aims. The interest of the topic therefore lies not just in the details of the transcendental arguments themselves, but in the wider issue of how they should best be conceived if they are not to raise as many problems as they solve.

In order to begin to address this issue, the nature of the sceptical threat needs to be properly characterized and differentiated, for it is in their effectiveness in dealing with this threat that the usefulness of transcendental arguments most obviously needs to be judged. It is to this task that I must therefore now turn.

Scepticism and Epistemology

In this chapter, I will explore the nature of the sceptical challenge in some detail, in order to see at what points a transcendental argument might be used against it, and what form that argument might take. I hope to show that, in considering how to deploy transcendental arguments against scepticism, not all forms of scepticism should be treated alike, so that different ways of using transcendental arguments are available. In particular, my claim will be that we can distinguish between *epistemic* and *justificatory* scepticism, and then between *reliabilist* justificatory scepticism and *normativist* justificatory scepticism, and that each calls for a different conception of these arguments and the role they are required to fulfil.

1.1 SCEPTICISM: EPISTEMIC AND JUSTIFICATORY

One of the features of scepticism that makes it so intriguing is that it relies for its vitality on *us*, and thus is essentially parasitic. For, if the sceptical challenge is to have any real force or interest, it must be directed at some sort of cognitive achievement that we would normally take ourselves to be capable of, and not one that anyway we would see as beyond us in our usual self-estimation. Thus, it is not scepticism to be told that we might well know nothing of the very distant past, but it is to be told that we might very well know nothing of yesterday; and it is not scepticism to be told that you know nothing of God if you are an atheist, but it is if you believe in divine revelation. It follows that the more basic the cognitive achievement which it challenges, the more devastating scepticism is, as the conviction that we are capable of that achievement is then harder for us to repudiate. The scepticism which can be *domesticated*, as just amounting to a useful reminder not to get carried away or indulge

in overweening intellectual pride, is bloodless; thus, for scepticism to retain its interest, it must find difficulties with our more modest or basic kinds of cognitive achievement, rather than with the more ambitious.

Another way in which scepticism can be seen to lose its force and significance, and once again become domesticated, is when it is conceived as a purely *negative* position, in the sense of doing nothing more than denying to us what we take for granted. Of course, such nay-saying may be of interest, and may be used to provoke the epistemologist into further reflection, concerning how best to hold his ground: but this is just to treat the sceptic as a puzzle-monger, a bringer of business to epistemology, rather than as a radical philosopher in his own right, often with a certain kind of positive agenda to defend.¹ Again, it may be that for scepticism to retain its vitality, it needs to avoid the kind of focus that can be treated merely negatively in this way.

It is perhaps for a combination of these reasons that the current preoccupation is not so much with *epistemic* scepticism (which denies that we have knowledge) as with *justificatory* scepticism (which denies that we have 'justified opinions' or rationally held beliefs).^{1 2} For, on the one hand, the latter kind of scepticism seems to be directed at a weaker epistemological category, which is therefore less easy for us to treat as 'deniable', as unproblematically beyond us; and on the other, justificatory scepticism has a much more obvious positive life, not just existing as a foil or puzzle to test a philosophical system, but as providing the basis for certain radical new kinds of thinking, from the *ataraxia* of Pyrrhonist scepticism to the anti-rationalism of Humean naturalism. Let me attempt to bring out the relative merits of epistemic and justificatory scepticism in more detail.

¹ Of course, certain kinds of scepticism are such that they *can* have no positive agenda, as they have gone so far as to undercut any ground on which this could consistently be built. Although the most radical in one sense, these forms of scepticism are the most negligible and ignorable in another. (A remark on my use of 'he': for stylistic reasons, I have preferred this form in impersonal contexts, but in these contexts 'he or she' should be understood throughout.)

² For clear instances of this recent trend, see Richard Fumerton, *Metaepistemology and Skepticism* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1995), esp. ch. 2, and Ruth Weintraub, *The Sceptical Challenge* (London: Routledge, 1997), esp. ch. 1. See also Crispin Wright, 'Scepticism and Dreaming: Imploding the Demon', *Mind*, 100 (1991), 87-116, p. 88, and Michael Williams, *Unnatural Doubts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 48-51.

At first sight, the epistemic sceptic may appear to have little to fear in choosing knowledge as his target: for most people would ordinarily think they know many things, and would be prepared to assert this, so that there is an apparently commonplace assumption here for him to attack. However, the difficulty for the sceptic is that once this attack is launched, our confident claims to knowledge collapse too quickly, suggesting that he has not really hit at a central part of our cognitive self-image. What seems to go wrong is that, as soon as the sceptical questioning begins, it becomes clear to us immediately that knowledge is being treated as a rather special epistemological category, and that, once this happens, we are too quickly able to concede to the sceptic that he is right to have reservations about whether we are capable of achieving knowledge, leaving us largely untouched and untroubled, as long as we can keep justification unscathed. It is then only if we can be persuaded that we *need* a cognitive capacity for knowledge (to avoid total unbelief, to preserve the rationality of science, or to protect ourselves against relativism, for example), whilst being shown we cannot have it, that the sceptical position regains its bite; but this requires some deeper philosophical and historical context, one that our ordinary sense of our cognitive achievements arguably does not give us.

What are the features of knowledge, as distinct from justified belief, that make it apparently so easy to concede defeat to the epistemic sceptic, and grant him his point with little sense of loss? It is customary to point to two such features. The first is that a belief is required to be *true* if it is to constitute knowledge, while a belief can be both justified and false; and the second is that the sceptic appears to hold that a belief which constitutes knowledge must be *certain*, while a belief can be justified without being completely error-proof. The danger for the sceptic is that, if he attempts to exploit the first point by insisting that we might lack knowledge because what we believe about (almost) anything could be false, many would find it unproblematic to respond by simply taking his point, and granting that in this sense knowledge cannot be guaranteed—complacently adding, perhaps, that only those fixated by a certain kind of philosophical project could ever have thought otherwise. Similarly, many have held that if the sceptic goes beyond the claim that we *might* lack knowledge to assert that we *do*, by exploiting our inability to be certain that anything we believe is indeed the case, this is equally easy to concede, as no one with a realistic sense

of our fallibility and ignorance could presumably think otherwise. Once this point is brought out, however, the sceptic again loses his radicalism, for his position now looks like no more than a sensible correction against overweening intellectual pride.³ What is worse for the epistemic sceptic is that it seems that we can claim that there is a *weaker* sense of 'knowledge' for us to fall back on, involving less than certainty, and that this can plausibly be said to be what we intended to be talking about all along.

It might be objected, however, that it is less easy to deflect the epistemic sceptic than this, by claiming that he has merely defeated a straw man. For it could be said that this response is disingenuous, in downplaying the way in which we *do* think we often know with *certainty* how things *really are*, so that the sceptic is addressing a real part of our cognitive self-image, something that is not so easy for us to give up. Epistemic scepticism would therefore not be directed merely at the hyperbolic conception of knowledge constructed by over-rationalistic philosophers (as has been suggested above), but at our commonly held attitudes and convictions.

It may be conceded that this objection is right on one point, namely that we do often talk of ourselves as being certain and hence ascribe knowledge to ourselves, so that we do appear to use this notion in the way the sceptic is attacking. However, it would appear that, once again, certainty is here not being thought of in the full-blown way the sceptic needs, but only relative to the purposes at hand. Thus, if asked whether it rained yesterday, I will naturally reply I am certain of it; but, as many people have observed, this is so only within ordinary contexts, and does not get extended to the sceptical case. It therefore seems that, unless we are convinced that something stronger than this is needed, we can quickly give the epistemic sceptic what he wants and move down to a weaker epistemological category, without feeling that anything fundamental has been given up.

It seems, then, that the dialectical situation requires the sceptic to follow us, and make this weaker epistemological category the new focus of his concern. For, in the face of the sceptical attack on knowledge, we can lay claim to reasonable or justified belief, feeling that even if our views about the world are fallible, we are at least *entitled* to have them; to give them up or doubt them would be wrong,

³ This point is emphasized by Keith Lehrer in his *Theory of Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 1990), 176-81.

even if there is some possibility that we could be mistaken. The *justificatory* sceptic therefore moves to attack this position.

It is clear that this form of scepticism is in a dialectically stronger position, for it is much harder to concede the sceptic's point whilst maintaining that little of value has been lost. Here, he is accusing us not just of possible ignorance, but of actual dogmatism, of holding on to a conviction beyond the point at which it is rationally justified or defensible. We may be prepared to admit that we are cognitively limited and hence open to error; it is less easy to grant that we are epistemically irresponsible, governed by caprice, wishful thinking, or habit, rather than reason and rational principle. The justificatory sceptic therefore has a position of much greater dialectical power.⁴

Historically, this has also been a much richer philosophical position, existing not merely as a negative counterpart of some positive system (as does Descartes's scepticism), but presenting a radical account of how the human condition should be conceived, once the limits of our rational natures are grasped. Thus, by getting us to see that not merely knowledge, but even justified belief regarding how things are in the absolute sense is impossible for us, the Pyrrhonist hoped to free us from much fruitless inquiry by bringing us back to a conception of things that is closer to the everyday. Likewise, Hume's attempt to challenge the role of reason within our intellectual economy is arguably built on his justificatory scepticism, which none the less has as its positive aim to construct a conception of the human mind with a greater dimension of naturalistic understanding. In these (and other) cases, justificatory scepticism has an intellectual vitality which makes it more than a challenge to a certain sort of philosophical project, and allows it to constitute a programme in its own right.

Of course, by distinguishing between epistemic and justificatory scepticism here, I do not mean to deny that it is possible for *some* kinds of sceptical attack on knowledge to have equal force against our claims to justified beliefs, if there are grounds for questioning the former that may equally well apply to the latter; all I am denying

⁴ Cf. Weintraub, *The Sceptical Challenge*, 13: 'The sceptic's claim that we have no warrant for many, indeed all, of our beliefs is one we should attempt to rebut. It impinges on our conduct as rational inquirers. What about his denials of our knowledge claims? If we fail to know because we lack justification, that is worrying. But... if a person can brand his own justified belief as a failure of knowledge he shouldn't be perturbed.'

is that *lack of certainty* has this feature, and hence is impotent as a threat to justification. By contrast, for example, if the sceptic claims we cannot know the external world exists because his evil demon hypothesis is equally compatible with our evidence, then it is arguable that this undercuts justification too, making this a much more potent challenge. A similar point has been rightly emphasized by Myles Burnyeat, regarding the reliability of our belief-forming methods:

All too often in contemporary discussion the target of the sceptic is taken to be knowledge rather than belief. Sceptical arguments are used to raise questions about the adequacy of the grounds on which we ordinarily claim to know about the external world, about other minds, and so on, but in truth there are few interesting problems got at by this means which are not problems for reasonable belief as well as for knowledge. It is not much of an oversimplification to say that the more serious the inadequacy exposed in the grounds for a knowledge-claim, the less reasonable it becomes to base belief on such grounds. To take a well-worn, traditional example, if the evidence of our senses is really shown to be unreliable and the inferences we ordinarily base on this evidence are unwarranted, the correct moral to draw is not merely that we should not claim to know things on these grounds but that we should not believe them either.⁵

However, in this sort of case, when the sceptic is focusing on a condition that (arguably) applies as much to justified belief as to knowledge, then the sceptic has nothing to lose by turning from epistemic to doxastic issues, concerning reasonable belief rather than knowledge.

Thus, while some may assume that in order to provide ‘an answer to scepticism’ transcendental arguments must go as far as refuting the epistemic sceptic, and showing that we have certainty, it may be said that this is *not* required of transcendental arguments and that this should not be seen as their goal, because epistemic scepticism is a rather empty problem, not requiring refutation in this way. In order to have a positive epistemological role, therefore, it may not be necessary for transcendental arguments to be effective in these terms, in overcoming the epistemic sceptic, if his position can be ignored in any case. Moreover, we have seen that scepticism may take two broad forms, where the basis of the sceptical position is

⁵ Myles Burnyeat, ‘Can the Sceptic Live his Scepticism?’, in Malcolm Schofield, Myles Burnyeat, and Jonathan Barnes (eds.), *Doubt and Dogmatism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 20-53, P. 22.

different in each; it follows, then, that transcendental arguments used against the one form of scepticism (where the epistemic sceptic requires conclusive proof) will not be the same as those deployed against the other (where the justificatory sceptic does not), and so different standards of assessment will need to be used in gauging their success.

I now wish to consider justificatory scepticism, to bring out how here, too, different kinds of scepticism may arise, depending on what account is given of what justification entails. It is frequently observed in the recent literature that there are many different accounts of justification; what is less frequently noticed is that how justificatory scepticism is conceived will depend on which of these accounts one subscribes to, for they do not all generate sceptical worries of the same kind. In the next section, I will therefore distinguish between different conceptions of justification, to bring out the difference between the kinds of scepticism to which they give rise (where, again, in later chapters we will see how transcendental arguments must be judged differently depending on the kind of scepticism which is our focus).

1.2 JUSTIFICATORY SCEPTICISM: TWO VARIETIES

Although it seems that epistemic scepticism can quickly be made to lose its bite, because it turns out that knowledge as here conceived is something we may not feel compelled to lay claim to, many have held that justificatory scepticism is more troubling, because it is surely hard to concede that we do not even possess justified or rational beliefs. The epistemic sceptic can be shrugged off, because we may accept quite quickly that (after all) we cannot lay claim to knowledge; but it appears harder to accept that (after all) we cannot lay claim even to having justified beliefs. But this is what the justificatory sceptic tries to show, either globally (we cannot claim that *any of* our beliefs are justified) or locally (we cannot claim that some deeply held belief is justified). My aim in this section is to bring out how the sceptic may be forced to move from one of these types of justificatory scepticism to the other, depending on the account of justification we endorse.

In order to bring out the way in which accounts of justification can differ, it is helpful to do so by reference to an example. Consider, for instance, what we might take to be a paradigm case of a justified belief. A person *S* is sitting in what seems to him to be a well-lit room, where he has no reason to think that there is anything wrong with his perceptual apparatus, and he has the belief that there is a cat lying in the corner of the room, because it appears to him that a cat is doing just that. It seems natural to say that if ever we could claim a belief is justified, then it is here; but differences arise over what this claim involves. In particular, at an intuitive level, if asked to say why *S*'s belief is justified, it would be usual to point to the nature of *S*'s perceptual experience in this situation; but, the interesting question is how *S*'s having this experience contributes to the justification of his belief that there is a cat in the corner of the room. One way of distinguishing between different theories of justification is to consider the different ways in which they would answer this question.

Now, it is characteristic of *reliabilist* accounts of justification to relate the justification of *S*'s belief here in some way to the reliability of perceptual experience as a method of belief formation. Such accounts hold that doxastic justification is a teleological or consequentialist notion, where the goal in question is truth. Thus, the *externalist reliabilist* will claim that for a belief to be justified it is not sufficient that the belief was formed on the basis of certain grounds or evidence as such; rather, to make a belief justified, forming beliefs on that evidence must contribute to the overall epistemic goal, and so must constitute a method that is sufficiently successful at giving *S* true beliefs—in other words, the method must be reliable. The reliabilist will therefore argue, in our example, that *S*'s perceptual belief is not justified simply because it *is* a perceptually grounded belief; rather, he will claim that if *S*'s belief is justified, it is because beliefs formed in this way have good epistemic results, in providing us with a more accurate conception of how things are. This then suggests that, for *S*'s belief to be justified, it must be the case that perceptual beliefs are generally speaking true, and so provide a reliable guide to what the world is like: perceptual experience is not a self-standing or intrinsically rational ground for belief in itself. The intuition behind the reliabilist position here is spelled out by Frederick Schmitt as follows:

justified belief. . . makes a positive contribution to the epistemically good end . . . The epistemically good end is plausibly identified with true belief, to distinguish epistemically justified beliefs from morally, prudentially, aesthetically, politically, or legally justified beliefs, which are distinguished by their own characteristic ends.

The idea that justified belief is belief that contributes to the end of true belief is most straightforwardly developed by identifying it with *reliable belief*—belief of a sort that is generally true . . . It is natural . . . to see justified belief as a *means* to true belief—or more exactly, as belief that *results* from a means to true belief. This view is most simply developed by *reliabilism*. Justified belief is *reliably formed belief* or belief that results from the exercise of a reliable cognitive belief-forming process, a process that tends to yield true beliefs.⁶

As this passage from Schmitt makes clear, the reliabilist position is analogous to rule consequentialism in ethics: for S's belief to be justified in so far as it comes about via perceptual experience, this belief-forming method must contribute to the goal of arriving at truth, where there is nothing *intrinsically* rational in basing one's belief on perceptual experience as such, just as in ethics an action is justified in so far as it conforms to some rule that helps maximize the good, where there is nothing *intrinsically* right about any rule *as such*. On this view, therefore, we can claim that a belief or action is justified or right only if we can show that believing or acting on that basis helps achieve some further end: reason or morality only demands that we believe or act in a certain way in so far as beliefs or actions of that type are related to this end in the right way. As Laurence Bonjour puts this point: 'epistemic justification is . . . in the final analysis only an instrumental value, not an intrinsic one'.⁷

Beginning with this form of reliabilism, we now need to consider how it might leave room for a significant and challenging form of scepticism. From this perspective, it has been observed that the externalist reliabilist makes it easy for the global justificatory

⁶ Frederick F. Schmitt, *Knowledge and Belief* (London: Routledge, 1992), 2-3. Cf. also Laurence Bonjour, *The Structure of Empirical Knowledge* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985), 7-8, and Richard Foley, *The Theory of Epistemic Rationality* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987), 7-8.

⁷ Bonjour, *The Structure of Empirical Knowledge*, 8. Cf. also the position defended by Alvin Goldman, where he argues that a belief is justified if it conforms to a right rule of justification that is itself an element in a right system of justification rules, which is itself right if it is appropriately reliable—that is, has a high enough 'truth ratio' in nearby possible worlds. See Alvin Goldman, *Epistemology and Cognition* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986), chs. 4-5.

sceptic: for, in order to lay claim to our having justified beliefs, we must be in a position to show that our beliefs meet the externalist reliabilist's criterion, of being formed on the basis of reliable methods. The sceptic will then argue that, while certain methods we use might actually *be* truth-conducive (and hence while we might actually *have* justified beliefs), it is not possible for us to *show* or *properly claim* we do, as it is not possible for us to have any non-circular reason for making any such claim, since we must rely on other beliefs of the same sort as grounds for supposing this to be the case (e.g. our belief that perceptual beliefs are largely correct, and thus that this belief about the cat is justified, rests on our other perceptual beliefs).⁸ Given this circularity, the reliabilist sceptic will argue that we must already have assumed that perceptual beliefs are reliable in order to take them as grounds for treating beliefs of this sort as legitimate, rendering this legitimating move empty, and leaving us with no reason to take our perceptual beliefs to be justified.⁹ The justificatory sceptic is thus here raising what I will call the *circularity objection*-, and I will call the justificatory sceptic who raises this objection the *reliabilist justificatory sceptic* (or sometimes the reliabilist sceptic for short).

In the face of this justificatory scepticism, some have argued that the best way to meet the difficulty is to weaken the externalist criterion of a justified belief somewhat, by retaining its reliabilist elements, but moving from an externalist to an internalist stance.

⁸ Cf. Paul K. Moser, *Philosophy after Objectivity: Making Sense in Perspective* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 5: 'A realist cannot cogently support realism now on the ground that many of us *see* some conceiving-independent objects. That ground is unstable, because questionbegging, against an agnostic's typical concerns. An agnostic questions whether what we call *seeing*—even when inter-subjectively backed—is ever a reliable avenue to conceiving-independent reality. This questioning neither demands an infallible process nor insists on demonstrative, deductive justification . . . The key issue here is: what non-questionbegging evidence, if any, have we to affirm that the satisfaction of such a justification condition is ever a reliable avenue to conceiving-independent reality?' Cf. also Alvin Goldman, 'The Internalist Conception of Justification', in P. A. French, T. E. Uehling, and H. K. Wettstein (eds.), *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, 5 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980), 27-51, esp. pp. 38-42.

⁹ Arguments showing how vulnerable the reliabilist is to justificatory scepticism in this respect are set out in William P. Alston, 'Epistemic Circularity', reprinted in his *Epistemic Justification* (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 1989), 319-49. Cf. also Moser, *Philosophy after Objectivity*, § 2.2, and his 'Realism, Objectivity, and Skepticism', in John Greco and Ernest Sosa (eds.), *The Blackwell Guide to Epistemology* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 70-91.

There are many ways of drawing a distinction between externalism and internalism, but here the important difference is this: whereas the externalist takes a purely 'objective' or 'third-personal' stance, in claiming that what matters is *actual* reliability of the believer's method, the internalist takes a more 'subjective' or 'first-personal' stance, holding that what matters is that the believer has grounds for *taking* the method to be reliable (whether or not it actually is).^{10 11 * * *} Is Thus, whereas the externalist reliabilist makes *actual* reliability a necessary condition for a belief-forming method to confer justification on a belief, for the internalist reliabilist *having grounds for taking it to be* reliable will suffice. One widespread way of making the case for internalist reliabilism is to use the sceptical demon hypothesis, where it is argued that, if such a hypothesis were actual, the fact that perception (for example) was thereby rendered unreliable would not deprive perceptual beliefs of their justification, provided that we continued to have the same grounds to believe in its reliability as a method that we do now (which are presumed to be sufficient)." In assessing the relation between justification and scepticism, therefore, we must take this distinction between externalist and internalist reliabilism into account.

However, even if we accept that the internalist reliabilist is right to weaken the criteria for justification in the way he suggests, it is hard to see how this helps us *vis-à-vis* the justificatory sceptic, for

¹⁰ Cf. Schmitt, *Knowledge and Belief*, 3-4: 'externalism ... [holds] that justified belief is simply a relation between the subject's belief and her environment (or the truth-values of various beliefs). A chief source of opposition to externalism is its neglect of the subject's own evaluations and perspective—her beliefs about her justification. There are apparent counter examples to reliabilism intended to show the relevance of epistemic beliefs.'

¹¹ Cf. Stewart Cohen, 'Justification and Truth', *Philosophical Studies*, 46 (1984), 279-95. PP- 281-2: 'I think the evil demon hypothesis (or its contemporary neuro-physiologist version) uncovers a defect in the [externalist] Reliabilist position. We can see this by supposing the hypothesis to be true. Imagine that unbeknown to us, our cognitive processes (e.g., perception, memory, inference) are not reliable owing to the machinations of the malevolent demon. It follows on a Reliabilist view that the beliefs generated by those processes are *never* justified.'

Is this a tenable result? I maintain that it is not... It strikes me as clearly false to deny that under these circumstances our beliefs could be justified. If we have every reason to believe e.g., perception, is a reliable process, the mere fact that unbeknown to us it is not reliable should not affect its justification-conferring status (*a fortiori* if we have good reason to believe that the conditions which in fact make perception unreliable do not obtain). Cf. also Foley, *The Theory of Epistemic Rationality*, esp. PP- '55-62, and John Greco, 'Virtues and Vices of Virtue Epistemology', *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, 23 (1993), 413-32, pp. 416-19.

it just seems to push the circularity problem one step further back. For, according to the internalist reliabilist, to ground our claim that our beliefs are justified, we just have to show that we have good grounds for thinking that our belief-forming methods are reliable, even if (as a matter of fact) they are not; but, in the face of the circularity problem, how can we show that we have such grounds? If the circularity problem is sufficient to block our claim to *actually having* reliably formed beliefs, surely it is also sufficient to block our claim to have *good reasons for thinking we have* reliably formed beliefs? The shift from externalist to internalist reliabilism would therefore appear to have gained us little.

Thus, many have been impressed by the fact that the circularity objection would seem to block our right to claim that we have justified beliefs, and (as we shall see in § 3.3) some have therefore tried to use transcendental arguments to meet this problem; certainly this constitutes one way of using transcendental arguments against justificatory scepticism. Broadly speaking, the aim of transcendental arguments used in this way will be to give us *independent* reasons for taking certain belief-forming methods to be reliable, hence showing that in making claims about the reliability of these methods we are not required to use these methods themselves, thereby avoiding the circularity problem. The externalist or internalist reliabilist may therefore turn to transcendental arguments conceived of in this manner, because he will see a real difficulty here that needs to be solved, where such arguments are one way of responding to this difficulty.¹²

However, it is important to see that not everyone will recognize a role for transcendental arguments in this way, as not everyone will see the problem for which they are said to be a possible solution; rather, they will take reliabilist justificatory scepticism to be as bloodless as the epistemic scepticism we discussed previously, in that it appears to raise a substantive issue but it is in fact one which is parasitic on a mistaken set of assumptions, so that reliabilist justificatory scepticism (like epistemic scepticism) can be made to dissolve once these assumptions have been set aside. What matters here is whether or not one subscribes to the reliabilist accounts of ¹²

¹² I say 'one way' here because, of course, they are not the *only* way. For a survey of other (empirical and a priori) arguments that might be used, see William P. Alston, *The Reliability of Sense Perception* (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 1993).

justification we have so far considered; for (as we shall see), if one does not, then the circularity objection will not arise (so that transcendental arguments designed to meet this objection are no longer required). Let me begin by showing how these other accounts of justification differ from the accounts so far presented, and how as a result they render us immune from the circularity objection and hence from reliabilist justificatory scepticism.

One account of justification that differs from the forms of internalist reliabilism that we have so far considered in a relevant way is still broadly reliabilist; but where, on the previous account, the believer had to have a *positive* reason to think that his belief-forming method was reliable, on this account this is denied. Thus, on this view (which might be called *negative internalist reliabilism*), rather than having to have such a positive reason, all the believer needs is to have no reason for *doubting* that his belief-forming method is reliable (a kind of 'innocent until proved guilty' approach). So, on this account, in our example as long as *S* has no reason to think his perceptual evidence is delusive (e.g. because he has been told he has poor vision, or because in his past experience this evidence has shown itself to be unreliable, or whatever) then *S*'s perceptual experience is sufficient to justify his belief. This position is therefore immune to the circularity objection that faced the previous reliabilist accounts, because on this criterion, to claim that we have justified beliefs, we just have to show that we have no reason to doubt the reliability of our belief-forming methods (not that we have some independent reason to think they are reliable), where it appears plausible to claim that we indeed do not have any such reason.¹³

The next account of justification that I will mention is also immune from the circularity objection, but takes an approach rather different from those we have considered hitherto. Up to now we have been treating justification as an essentially reliabilist and hence teleological notion: namely, to make a belief justified, a belief-forming method must contribute towards the goal of arriving at truth (or at least, the believer must have grounds for thinking, or no grounds for doubting, that it so contributes). The next account of justification I will consider takes a different tack. On this account, rather than holding that justification is in some way related to reliability,

¹³ This account of justification has been said to play a role in the thought of many philosophers, including Reid, Peirce, Wittgenstein, and Roderick Chisholm.

it is said instead that it is related to whether or not the believer has formed the belief in the light of what *we* (as the community of believers of which this believer forms a part) take to be good evidence for belief (whether or not such evidence is actually reliable, and whether or not we can produce a non-question-begging argument to show it is). Thus, to take our example again, given that we think that perceptual experience is (*ceteris paribus*) a good ground for forming beliefs, then by forming his belief in that way S' has acquired a justified belief. Clearly, then, on this approach (which might be called a *doxastic practice* account) the circularity problem does not arise, as to claim we have justified beliefs we are simply required to show that we have conformed to what we take to be good practices, without having to 'ground' those practices in any demonstration of their reliability.^{14 15}

The final account I will consider shares something with the doxastic practice account, in that it too moves away from a purely reliabilist outlook; but rather than holding that a belief is justified merely if it fits with the ongoing practice, it holds that a belief is justified if it fits in with the norms governing a particular belief-forming method, where the method is held to be intrinsically rational. It is characteristic of this account (which might be called *deontological normativism*¹⁵) that if a believer has used a rational belief-forming method correctly (i.e. in accordance with the norms governing its use), and hence has based his belief on certain kinds of grounds, then he has acquired a justified belief, where whether a belief-forming method is rational is independent of its actual reliability. Thus, for the deontological normativist, evidence of certain kinds (such as perceptual experience, memory experience, testimony, etc.) is taken to

¹⁴ This approach is commonly associated with P. F. Strawson, whose position is considered below, in § 1.3. For a discussion of how this approach may also be found in Wittgenstein, see William P. Alston, 'A "Doxastic Practice" Approach to Epistemology', in Marjorie Clay and Keith Lehrer (eds.), *Knowledge and Scepticism* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1989), 1-29, pp. 4-5.

¹⁵ In the recent literature on doxastic justification, 'deontological' has come to mean the view that justification comes from believing blamelessly, through the fulfilment of one's epistemic duties, whilst the basis for these duties is given in consequentialist terms. However, as William Alston has explicitly acknowledged, this is rather to miss the point of the distinction between a deontological conception of justification and a consequentialist one, a distinction which I wish to preserve in my use of the terminology here. See William P. Alston, 'Concepts of Epistemic Justification', reprinted in his *Epistemic Justification* (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 1989), 81-114, PP- 84-5 n. 4.

be rational grounds for belief, and a believer who obeys the norms governing acceptance of such evidence is thus said to have a justified belief, whilst beliefs that are not based on this sort of evidence (for example, those formed on the basis of clairvoyance, guesswork, etc.) correspondingly lack justification, as they are not in conformity with the demands of reason.¹⁶ This position is thus analogous to the deontological position in ethics, which says that you have behaved rightly if you have followed the norms governing certain kinds of action (e.g. repaying a loan, honouring one's parents, keeping a promise), regardless of whether actions of these kinds lead to the realization of any sort of end (such as maximizing happiness or whatever).¹⁷ Now, given this account of justification, it is clear that here too the circularity problem will fail to arise, as to claim that our beliefs are justified we are just required to show that they conform to the norms governing these intrinsically rational methods (such as perception, memory, testimony, etc.), where

¹⁶ Cf. John L. Pollock, *Contemporary Theories of Knowledge* (London: Hutchinson, 1986), 22, where Pollock labels this sort of position internalism, emphasizing what he calls its *cognitive essentialism*: 'The idea behind internalism is that the justifiedness of a belief is determined by whether it was arrived at or is currently sustained by "correct cognitive processes". The view is that being justified in holding a belief consists of conforming to epistemic norms, where the latter tell you "how to" acquire new beliefs and reject old ones. In other words, epistemic norms describe which cognitive processes are correct and which are incorrect, and being justified consists of "making the right moves". The internalist makes the further assumption that the correctness of an epistemic move (a cognitive process) is an inherent feature of it. For example, it might be claimed that reasoning in accordance with *modus ponens* is always correct, whereas arriving at beliefs through wishful thinking is always incorrect ... In particular, varying contingent properties of the cognitive processes themselves will not affect whether a belief is justified. This might be called *cognitive essentialism*. According to cognitive essentialism, the epistemic correctness of a cognitive process is an essential feature of that process and is not affected by contingent facts such as the reliability of the process in the actual world.'

¹⁷ Cf. H. A. Prichard, 'Does Moral Philosophy Rest on a Mistake?', reprinted in his *Moral Obligation and Duty and Interest: Essays and Lectures* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 1—17, pp. 7-8: 'The sense of obligation to do, or of the rightness of, an action of a particular kind is absolutely underivative or immediate. The rightness of an action consists in its being the origination of something of a certain kind A in a situation of a certain kind, a situation consisting in a certain relation B of the agent to others or to his own nature ... [G]iven that by a process which is, of course, merely a process of general and not of moral thinking we can come to recognize that [a] proposed act is one by which we shall originate A in a relation B, then we appreciate the obligation immediately or directly, the appreciation being an activity of *moral* thinking. We recognize, for instance, that this performance of a service to X, who has done us a service, just in virtue of its being the performance of a service to one who has rendered a service to the would-be agent, ought to be done by us.'

we are not required to show that, in so doing, we have been forming the belief in a way that is in fact reliable.

To see this, consider once again *S* and his belief about the cat. For the deontological normativist, *S*'s belief is justified in so far as he formed his belief on the basis of it looking to him that a cat is in the corner, in a way that conforms to the norms governing beliefs formed on this sort of basis (e.g. he did not have evidence that makes it unlikely that the cat is there, or that the experience he is having as of the cat is not being caused by the cat but an evil demon, or that his eyesight is abnormal or unreliable).¹⁸ So, for the deontologist, *S*'s belief is epistemically justified *qua* perceptual belief, because *S* has formed his belief in the right way, as laid down by the rules governing beliefs of this type. For the positive internalist reliabilist, on the other hand, for *S*'s belief to be justified in so far as it is a perceptual belief, *S* must have some grounds for thinking that perceptual experience is generally truth-conducive, whereas for the deontological normativist this is not necessary, as on this view justification comes from the nature of the method as such, without the believer being required to step outside the circle of doxastic norms, and show that beliefs held in accordance with such evidence will be largely truth-preserving. Again, a consideration of the analogous contrast in ethics may help here. For the deontologist, *S*'s action *a* is justified in so far as it is an action of a certain type (e.g. repaying a loan), where a consideration of *S*'s beliefs, desires, and inclinations

¹⁸ It may appear that this last point means that the deontological normativist has reintroduced the kind of reliabilist considerations that led to the circularity problem. This is not so for two reasons. First, the deontological normativist is here treating unreliability as a defeater, so *S* is merely required to have no reason to think his perceptual mechanism is unreliable; the deontological normativist's position is therefore no more susceptible to the circularity problem than the negative internal reliabilist position discussed above. Secondly, where the deontological normativist differs even from this kind of reliabilism is that the latter takes the unreliability of perception to render perceptual beliefs unjustified because perception is then less likely to lead to true beliefs; but for the deontological normativist, where evidence of unreliability makes *S*'s belief unjustified, this is because reason's requirement that we take this evidence as grounds for no longer going with our perceptual experience is *intrinsic*, and so is not dependent on whether in so doing we make it more likely that we will achieve any independently specifiable epistemic goal. (Again, compare the ethics case: here, the deontological normativist may allow that I should not tell the truth, in cases where such truth-telling would cause great upset; but he may say that this upset is a defeater that is simply built in to the conditions of morally right truth-telling, and not there because in such circumstances truth-telling is less effective at getting us to some extrinsic moral end.)

shows that 5 has conformed to the rules governing actions of this type (e.g. S did not pay his lender the money, knowing it to be stolen). For the internalist consequentialist, on the other hand, S's action is justified in so far as a consideration of S's perspective shows that he has adequate grounds for taking it to be an action of a type that has good-making results. On the internalist consequentialist picture this is required, for on this view nothing makes any type of action right in itself, but an action is only right if from the agent's perspective actions of that type appear to tend towards the good; whilst on the deontological picture, this consequentialist element is not required, as there is no such grounding, on which the rightness of S's action depends.

Now, of course, none of the three accounts of doxastic justification we have mentioned here is without difficulties. A central objection to the negative reliabilist internalist approach has been to question our right to take certain methods (e.g. perception) to be reliable without any positive evidence. Robert Fogelin has put this objection as follows:

Why accept this dogma that we are *entitled* to a presumption in favor of the senses? It is not needed for an adequate *description* of our use of epistemic terms: The mere fact that we do (for the most part) presume that our senses are reliable is all we need for that. We need the notion of entitlement only if we are trying to find a general *vindication* of our reliance on our senses. That, of course, is the very point of the issue in trying to refute Pyrrhonism. What we need, then, is some *independent* reason for accepting the claim that we are entitled to the presumption that our senses are reliable. Without this independent argument, the response to Pyrrhonism simply fails.¹⁹

Against the doxastic practice approach, the claim is that it is dangerously *relativistic*, in so far as it makes justified beliefs relative to the practices of the community of believers, and so closes off the possibility of any external critique, whereby we can claim that a believer lacks justified beliefs in so far as these practices are mistaken or wrong. Thirdly, against the deontological normativist account in epistemology, it is not surprising that many of the issues raised within epistemology echo those raised between deontology and consequentialism in ethics, given the parallels that exist between the

¹⁹ Robert J. Fogelin, *Pyrrhonian Reflections on Knowledge and Justification* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 133-4.

approaches in both areas.²⁰ Thus, the deontologist in epistemology will argue that the reliabilist takes ‘one step too many’, in seeking some sort of grounding or explanation for why it is that by being of a certain type, a belief comes to be justified, when it would be better to say that the legitimacy of beliefs of these types is simply immediate—just as the deontologist in ethics will argue that the moral justification for a certain act lies simply in its being the kind of act it is, and in no way depends on its consequences, or the consequences of acting in that way as a general rule.²¹ Moreover, he may point out that on his theory, the principles of justification in epistemology, as in ethics, come out as a priori in the right way, whereas for reliabilism (as for consequentialism) whether a principle holds can only be a contingent and a posteriori matter, dependent as it is on whether the type of belief (or action) specified in that principle stands in the right relation to the truth (or good).²² Against this, the reliabilist in

²⁰ Such parallels have been noted by several writers: cf. Linda Trinkaus Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 7-8.

²¹ Cf. William G. Lycan, *Judgement and Justification* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 155-6: ‘Nor, please note, do I understand “rational” here as “likely to yield truth”, for this would be both to take “likely” as primitive, and to introduce “true” at the beginning of our epistemological quest rather than see it fall out at the end. It seems to me that the idea of rationality or warrant is more accessible to everyday intuition than is any particular notion of “likelihood” or probability, and as we shall see, I think no formal probability relation can exhaust epistemological justifiability. Also, introducing “true” at this point would threaten circularity or regress again and invite questions of the form “But what reasons have you to think that *U* leads to truth?” where *V* is a posited ultimate principle of theory-choice. Such questions have answers, but the answers can only be given after our system of epistemic principles is in place; they cannot properly be demanded at the outset. In the beginning, “rational” is a primitive term used to evaluate epistemic acts; particular principles are later seen to “tend toward truth”, because the beliefs they produce are rational—not the other way round.’ Cf. also Roderick Firth, ‘Epistemic Merit, Intrinsic and Instrumental’, *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association*, 55 (1981), 5-23.

²² Cf. Robert Audi, *Epistemology* (London: Routledge, 1998), 312: ‘[But] are the kinds of principles of justification I have been using a priori? This is certainly arguable; but it is also controversial. On a reliability theory of justification, for instance, a belief is justified by virtue of being grounded in reliable belief-producing processes such as perceptual ones; and it is apparently not an a priori matter what processes are *reliable*, that is, actually produce a suitably large proportion of true beliefs. This is the sort of thing that must be determined largely by observation.

Thus, for reliabilism, in order to know what principles account for justification, one must know what processes tend to generate true beliefs. One could determine that only through considerable experience. Hence, if these principles are empirical, the circularity problem just mentioned would beset the attempt, within a reliabilist framework, to justify them.

On the other hand, I argued above that reliability theories are less plausible for

epistemology will object to the apparent intuitionism of the deontologist's position, arguing that this leaves it unclear how to establish which types of belief are rational (if it is revealed to *S* that *p* in a dream, then why isn't *S*'s belief that *p* justified?)—just as the consequentialist in ethics might argue that our sense that murder is wrong is insufficient in itself to rule out claims to the contrary.²³ The reliabilist might also argue that his position is more naturalistically respectable, in offering some explanation for the way in which our practices come to embody certain norms, in so far as these help us towards the goal of truth, whilst allowing us to treat an evaluative property like epistemic justification as supervenient on the non-evaluative property of reliability.²⁴ In response, the deontologist may argue that this commitment to naturalism is misplaced, precisely because we are dealing here with normative issues. He could also maintain that, though there is nothing more basic to appeal to against someone who claims that beliefs of an unorthodox type are justified (e.g. those based on a dream), the fact that we find it hard to make any real sense of these claims is evidence enough that they are

justification than for knowledge, and I believe that it is more reasonable, though by no means obviously correct, to suppose that at least some principles about the conditions for justification are a priori.'

²³ Though his position has strong normativist elements, Pollock sets out the worry here quite clearly (where his use of the terminology of internalism and externalism corresponds to my contrast between normativism and reliabilism, respectively): 'To my mind the most telling objection to existing internalist theories is that they are simultaneously incomplete and ad hoc. They are incomplete in that they leave the concept of epistemic justification unanalyzed, and they are ad hoc in that they propose arrays of epistemic rules without giving any systematic account of why those should be the right rules. The methodology of internalism has been to describe our reasoning, rather than to justify or explain it. These two points are connected. As long as we take the concept of epistemic justification to be primitive and unanalyzed, there is no way to *prove* that a particular epistemic rule is a correct rule. All we can do is collect rules that seem intuitively right, but we are left without any way of justifying or supporting our intuitions. Herein lies the main attraction of externalism. Externalist theories begin by proposing analyses of epistemic justification from which epistemic rules can be derived. Epistemic justification is no longer taken as primitive, and there is no longer any need to simply posit epistemic rules' (John L. Pollock, 'Epistemic Norms', *Synthese*, 71 (1987), 61-95, p. 63). For similar criticisms, see R. B. Brandt, 'The Concept of Rational Belief', *Monist*, 68 (1985), 3-23, esp. pp. 4-8; Cohen, 'Justification and Truth', esp. pp. 288-92; and Jonathan L. Kvanvig, 'Why Should Inquiring Minds Want to Know? *Meno* Problems and Epistemological Axiology', *Monist*, 81 (1998), 426-51, esp. pp. 433-6.

²⁴ Cf. Philip Kitcher, 'The Naturalists Return', *Philosophical Review*, 101 (1992), 53-114, esp. pp. 62 ff.

spurious—just as, in ethics, it is not clear that we would find the claim that murder is morally legitimate intelligible, as a view on what constitutes the right.²⁵

Now, I do not want to pursue these issues any further here, nor do I wish to adjudicate between the accounts just discussed and the externalist and positive internalist reliabilist theories we considered earlier.²⁶ Rather, my aim is merely to show that from the perspective of these accounts transcendental arguments do not have to solve the circularity problem in order to answer scepticism, as from this perspective there is no such problem. So, from the point of view of these accounts, if we ask whether transcendental arguments provide ‘an answer to scepticism’, this cannot be assessed in terms of the effectiveness of these arguments *vis-à-vis* the circularity problem, because on these accounts the problem does not arise. The question now, therefore, is whether from the perspective of these accounts transcendental arguments can still be of anti-sceptical value, and how their success in this regard can be judged.

In order to answer this question, it is important to see that even if we adopt one or other of these accounts of justification, and so drop the circularity problem as no longer applicable, it can be seen that there is another and rather different justificatory problem that is faced even on these accounts of justification, as this problem is *independent* of the circularity objection. The form the sceptic will give this problem is not to direct his attack at our belief-forming methods, and ask whether we can ground them in the right way (for this would take us back to the now-redundant circularity objection); rather, he is prepared to take it as given that methods like perception, memory, testimony, etc. can give us justified beliefs. Instead, this form of scepticism is directed at *particular beliefs* (e.g. our beliefs in

²⁵ A more radical critique of reliabilism, which I will not discuss further here, may take the form of attacking the realist notion of truth on which the reliabilist depends: cf. Richard Rorty, ‘Is Truth a Goal of Inquiry? Donald Davidson versus Crispin Wright’, reprinted in his *Truth and Progress* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 19–42, pp. 24–5.

²⁶ For a careful and finely balanced discussion of many of the questions raised here, cf. Robert Audi, ‘Justification, Truth and Reliability’, reprinted in his *The Structure of Justification* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 299–331. It may be that ‘adjudication’ is not required here at all; for, as Wayne Riggs has recently argued, it could be that rather than being rivals, when we have divergent accounts like this, they are really analysing different notions of justification: see Wayne D. Riggs, ‘What are the “Chances” of Being Justified?’, *Monist*, 81 (1998), 452–72.

other minds, or the external world), and tries to show that the problem is that these beliefs do not relate in the right way to any such justification-conferring methods (e.g. how can our belief that other minds exist be based on perceptual experience, when all we ever see of other people is their bodies? And how can it be an inductive belief based on an argument from analogy, if we can only arrive at it by generating from one case, namely our own? And in the external world case, how can our belief in the external world be justified either directly or indirectly, when it is not supported by our sensory experience, or by any inferential argument?). I will call this objection the *normativist objection*, because it emphasizes that there is a gap between certain beliefs we have (e.g. in other minds, or the existence of the external world), and the evidence we have available to support these beliefs, so these beliefs are not licensed by any appropriate doxastic norm; and I will call the form of scepticism that urges this objection *normativist justificatory scepticism* (or *normativist scepticism* for short).

It is important to note that the sceptic who raises the normativist objection does not seek to question the legitimacy of our belief-forming methods as such (as does the sceptic who raises the circularity objection): that is, he is not claiming that we should give up our perceptual belief that *p* because we have no non-circular reason to think that perception is reliable. The normativist sceptic cannot challenge our belief-forming methods in this way, as the normativist objection raises no challenge for us at the level of our belief-forming methods. For the justificatory issue it raises is not whether *p* is justified *qua* belief of a certain type because we do not have reason to think beliefs of that type are reliably formed, but rather whether *p* is justified *qua* particular belief, where it does not appear to have the right evidential grounding judged in terms of those methods. Thus, where the reliabilist sceptic raises a difficulty at the level of our belief-forming methods (e.g. how can our perceptually grounded beliefs be justified if we have no good reason to suppose that perceptual evidence is truth-conducive?), the normativist sceptic raises a difficulty at the level of particular beliefs, as to whether we have any (or any sufficient) evidence even *granted* the justification-conferring status of our usual methods (e.g. how can belief in the continued existence of unperceived objects be justified, when nothing we have by way of evidence from doxastic methods like perception or inductive inference is sufficient to support this?).

Once this contrast between reliabilist and normivist scepticism is drawn, it should be clear that different types of response will be required. Against the reliabilist sceptic, we need a way of replying to the circularity problem, which challenges us to show that we have any grounds for taking certain sorts of belief to be legitimate, when it seems we cannot give any non-circular reason for thinking that beliefs of this sort are formed using a reliable method. Against the normivist sceptic, on the other hand, we need to find a way to show that particular beliefs (e.g. in the existence of other minds, or the external world and so on) can indeed be shown to be licensed by a norm, by finding grounds for these beliefs that will bring them under one such legitimate belief-forming method (e.g. by showing that our belief in the existence of the external world *has* got sufficient perceptual or inductive support to make it a legitimate belief). Having drawn the distinction between these two types of justificatory scepticism, we will see in later chapters what role transcendental arguments might take in responding to them, and how this approach might take a different form in each case.

To sum up the discussion thus far: I have drawn three contrasts, between epistemic and justificatory scepticism (§ i.i); between five different accounts of justification (externalist reliabilism, positive internalist reliabilism, negative internalist reliabilism, a doxastic practice account, and deontological normativism);²⁷ and between reliabilist justificatory scepticism and normivist justificatory scepticism (this section). The relation between these various positions is illustrated diagrammatically in Figure i. As I hope to show, transcendental arguments can be and have been given a role in arguments against each of the forms of scepticism I have discussed, but, because these forms of scepticism are really rather different, the nature of these arguments has varied: as we shall see in the next two chapters, this means that objections to these arguments may apply to some versions of transcendental arguments but not to others, so that the distinctions I

²¹ I do not intend my discussion here to suggest that these accounts of justification exhaust all the options, but rather I confine my discussion to these because they raise the issues most relevant to my treatment of transcendental arguments. It is none the less the case that other apparently different accounts of justification (e.g. those involving the notion of epistemic virtue) seem often to collapse back into one or other of these, for example in Ernest Sosa's account of intellectual virtue in reliabilist terms, as 'a quality bound to help maximize one's surplus of truth over error' (Ernest Sosa, 'Knowledge and Intellectual Virtue', reprinted in his *Knowledge in Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 225-44, P- 225).

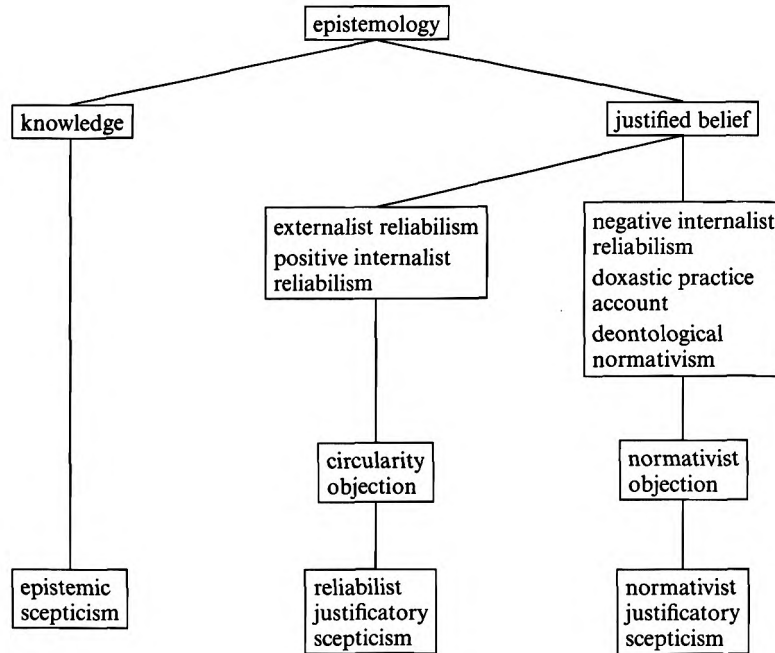


Fig. i

have discussed regarding the sceptical challenge need to be taken into account when assessing the effectiveness of these objections.

It will turn out that on the positive account I wish to give of transcendental arguments, much will turn on the distinction I have made between reliabilist and normativist scepticism, which itself follows from the distinction I have made between externalist and positive internalist reliabilism on the one hand and the other accounts of justification on the other. My discussion of this distinction may have so far appeared rather abstract and general. Before proceeding further, therefore, I now wish to provide a more concrete example of how this distinction works and what it involves, through a consideration of Strawson's response to Humean scepticism over induction, as presented at the end of his *Introduction to Logical Theory*.^{2*}

²⁸ P. F. Strawson, *Introduction to Logical Theory* (London: Methuen, 1952), 248-63.

1.3 THE PROBLEM OF INDUCTION: RELIABILIST VS. NORMATIVIST JUSTIFICATORY SCEPTICISM

In his sceptical argument over induction, Hume poses a problem that clearly operates in reliabilist and internalist terms: in order to claim that we are justified in believing that the sun will rise tomorrow, we must have some reason to think that that belief is of a sort that is generally reliable with respect to how things will turn out, *qua* inductive belief. However, our reason to think that such an inductive belief will be successful with respect to the future is said to be based on the track record of such beliefs in the past; but, for this to provide any grounds for us to think that inductive beliefs are reliable concerning the future, we would have to have some non-inductive reason for thinking that the types of belief that have been reliable will continue to be so, for otherwise the reliability of induction will just have been assumed. We might then try to provide some grounds for projecting from the past success of induction to the future by appealing to some sort of general metaphysical principle, such as the principle that nature is uniform; but Hume then points out that we have no grounds for *that* principle, other than inductive ones, making our position circular and making it impossible for us to ground our claim that induction is reliable, and hence that we are justified in our particular beliefs about the future. For Hume, this is one example of many where the sense of our own rationality has outstripped the reality: as Peter Lipton has put it, ‘according to Hume, we are addicted to the practice of induction, but it is a practice that cannot be justified’.²⁹

Now, in his response to Hume,³⁰ Strawson does not seek to answer the circularity objection directly, by somehow trying to

²⁹ Peter Lipton, *Inference to the Best Explanation* (London: Routledge, 1991), 11.

³⁰ In fact, as Strawson makes clear in a subsequent paper (‘On Justifying Induction’, *Philosophical Studies*, 9 (1958), 20-1), he does not actually think Hume considered himself to be raising a ‘problem’ that required a ‘response’, as Hume’s naturalism made the issue redundant, in so far as Nature gives us no choice but to form beliefs inductively; it might therefore be better to speak here of Strawson’s response to the *Humean*, who accepts Hume’s negative reasoning while overlooking the naturalistic context of that reasoning, whereby the ‘problem’ is dissolved (in Strawson’s view). As Hilary Putnam has pointed out, Strawson’s non-sceptical reading of Hume here foreshadows Strawson’s own development of a naturalistic response to scepticism, of the sort we will discuss below in § 3.2.5 (see Hilary Putnam, ‘Strawson and Scepticism’, in Lewis Edwin Hahn (ed.), *The Philosophy of P. F. Strawson* (Chicago and La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1998), 273-87).

show that it is possible for us to find non-circular grounds for taking inductively formed beliefs to be truth-conducive. Instead, he rejects the whole picture on which the problem relies, according to which an inductively formed belief is justified only if we have reason to believe that, as a method, induction will enable us to achieve predictive success. On some readings, Strawson is said to reject this picture, because he endorses what I have called a doxastic practice account of justification: inductive evidence is one of the kinds of evidence that we take to provide good grounds for belief, and this is sufficient to make our inductively formed beliefs justified, without the question of reliability arising.³¹ Strawson may also be read as adopting an account that is closer to deontological normativism than this: that is, as suggesting that inductive evidence provides a rational justification for belief because induction is an intrinsically rational method, so if we have formed our belief in accordance with the norms governing induction, then that belief is justified (where this is so because of the fact that induction is an intrinsically rational method, rather than just because this is treated as such within the practices of our doxastic community).³² Either way, he accepts the claim that the predictive success of induction is contingent and so that in the long run induction could turn out to be an unreliable method; but he insists that, even if this were the case, induction would still constitute a rational means of belief formation, so that by following its norms we would still have acquired rational beliefs (although he allows, of course, that it is a norm of induction that if the universe *did* become chaotic, and hence if we became aware that inductive reasoning was no longer successful, we should make fewer predictions than previously).^{33 * 35}

³¹ Cf. Strawson, *Introduction to Logical Theory*, 261-2: 'We have already seen that the rationality of induction, unlike its "successfulness", is not a fact about the constitution of the world. It is a matter of what we mean by the word "rational", in its application to any procedure for forming opinions about what lies outside our observations or that of available witnesses.'

³² Cf. *ibid.* 249: 'to call a particular belief reasonable or unreasonable is to apply inductive standards, just as to call a particular argument valid or invalid is to apply deductive standards'.

³⁵ Cf. *ibid.* 262: 'The chaotic universe just envisaged ... is not one in which induction would cease to be rational; it is simply one in which it would be impossible to form rational expectations to the effect that specific things would happen. It might be said that in such a universe it would at least be rational to refrain from forming specific expectations, to expect nothing but irregularities. Just so. But this is itself a higher-order induction: where irregularity is the rule, expect further irregularities.'

What will worry the reliabilist here is that Strawson appears to give inductive evidence a privileged status as a justification for belief, but without relating that status sufficiently to the issue of whether induction is truth-conducive. Bonjour has objected along these lines as follows:

Strawson's response to the problem of induction does not speak to the central issue raised by Humean scepticism: the issue of whether the conclusions of inductive arguments are likely to be true when the corresponding premises are true. It amounts to saying merely that if we reason in this way, we can correctly call ourselves 'reasonable' and our evidence 'strong', according to our accepted community standards. But to the underlying issue of whether following these standards is a good way to find the truth, [Strawson's] response appears to have nothing to say.³⁴

This objection highlights the contrast between the positive internalist reliabilist and the other approaches that do not raise this issue: for the former, there needs to be some assurance that beliefs formed inductively are truth-conducive before beliefs grounded in this way can be said to be justified, whereas on the latter this requirement is rejected.³⁴

³⁴ Laurence Bonjour, 'Problems of Induction', in Jonathan Dancy and Ernest Sosa (eds.), *A Companion to Epistemology* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1992), 391-5, p. 393. Cf. also Laurence Bonjour, *In Defense of Pure Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 199: 'It need not be denied that Strawson's argument... does establish that accepting inductively supported conclusions is reasonable or justified in *some* sense of those multifarious terms. Being in accord with generally or conventionally accepted standards may be conceded to constitute one species of justification... But justification in this sense has no immediate bearing on likelihood of truth and hence is quite compatible with a thoroughgoing skepticism of the sort discussed earlier.' For a further illustration of how the contrast between reliabilism and deontological normativism comes out in the debate over induction, see the discussion between Wesley C. Salmon, Stephen F. Barker, and Henry E. Kyburg Jr., 'Symposium on Inductive Evidence', reprinted in Richard Swinburne (ed.), *The Justification of Induction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), 48-73. The contrast is brought out particularly sharply by Salmon in the following comment (ibid. 66-7): 'Professors Barker and Kyburg agree, though on different grounds, that induction is justified because it is rational... In sharp contrast to my discussants, I maintain that the concept of rationality will not do the job by itself, but that it needs help from another quarter. A justification of induction must, I hold, hinge upon a relation between induction and frequency of truth-preservation or success. I do not deny, of course, that induction is rational; I claim it is rational *because of* its relation to truth-preservation. Barker and Kyburg, on the other hand, assert that the use of inductive methods is rational *regardless of* any relation to success.' Cf. also Wesley C. Salmon, 'Should We Attempt to Justify Induction?', reprinted in Herbert Feigl, Wilfrid Sellars, and Keith Lehrer (eds.), *New Readings in Philosophical Analysis* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1972), 500-10.

As I have said, I do not wish to adjudicate between the internalist reliabilist and these other approaches; instead, I wish to consider the different forms of scepticism to which they give rise. As Hume's initial starting-point shows and as we have seen, the obvious sceptical problem for the internalist reliabilist is to give some non-circular grounds for taking induction to be successful. However, whilst this kind of problem will impress the internalist reliabilist,³⁵ it should be clear that the sceptic cannot adopt this sort of approach to someone like Strawson, who precisely tries to separate the normative status of certain beliefs from the need to give positive and independent grounds for assessing the reliability of the belief-forming methods on which they are based.³⁶ The sceptic must therefore switch from an 'external' to an 'internal' stance, where what is at issue is not whether or not following particular doxastic methods is justification-conferring, but whether particular beliefs can receive adequate support from those methods.

The sort of shift in sceptical approach that is required here is well brought out by A. J. Ayer, who rejects reliabilist scepticism as unanswerable yet essentially bogus, but who none the less takes normativist scepticism seriously.³⁷ Thus, like Strawson, he accepts but is unmoved by the failure of any attempt to establish the reliability of induction, for he sees inductive evidence as inherently justifying.³⁸ Where he sees the force of scepticism, however, is when the

³⁵ Cf. Weintraub, *The Sceptical Challenge*, ch. 8.

³⁶ Cf. also Robert Audi, *Epistemology*, 312, where he suggests that once a reliability theory of justification is rejected, the circularity problem does not arise.

³⁷ See A. J. Ayer, *The Problem of Knowledge* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1956), ch. 1, esp. pp. 71–83. Cf. also A. J. Ayer, *The Central Questions of Philosophy* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), 63–7.

³⁸ Cf. Ayer, *The Problem of Knowledge*, 74–5: 'What is demanded [by the sceptic] is a proof that what we regard as rational procedure really is so; that our conception of what constitutes good evidence is right. But of what kind is this proof supposed to be? A purely formal proof would not be applicable, and anything else is going to beg the question . . . [But] this does not mean that the use of scientific method is irrational. It could be irrational only if there were a standard of rationality which it failed to meet; whereas in fact it goes to set the standard: arguments are judged to be rational or irrational by reference to it.' Cf. also Strawson, *Introduction to Logical Theory*, 257, and for a more recent statement of this view see Lycan, *Judgement and Justification*, 135–6: 'On pain of circularity or regress, we know that some epistemic methods or procedures (whether explanatory methods or others) are going to be fundamental; so if a theorist is claiming to have discovered some such fundamental epistemic method, it is a fortiori inappropriate to respond by demanding a justification of it, in the sense of a deduction of it from some more fundamental principle—indeed

sceptic can show that particular widely held beliefs are none the less problematic, in so far as they cannot be said to be based on any such inherently justifying grounds. Ayer presents the sceptical argument here as proceeding in three stages, taking our belief in the existence of the external world as typical: first, the sceptic shows that this is not based on perception, and must therefore be inferred in some way; secondly, the sceptic shows that our belief cannot be assimilated to any kind of legitimate inductive or deductive belief, as the only premises available do not constitute the sort of deductive or inductive support required to make the inference sound; so thirdly, the sceptic concludes that this belief lacks rational grounds, and that we persist in it (if we do) only at the cost of showing ourselves to be doxastically irresponsible.³⁹ Here, once again, Ayer treats the sceptical threat as being normativist and not reliabilist, where the sceptical issue is how far we can claim that these beliefs conform to certain doxastic principles governing inference, rather than how far those principles themselves can be grounded in reliabilist terms.⁴⁰

Having laid out the sceptical problematic in some detail, and distinguished the kinds of scepticism we might face, it will later be shown what different forms transcendental arguments need to take, in order to respond to these distinct sceptical challenges. As I have said, the hope is that if we do not treat all types of transcendental argument alike, but distinguish them by reference to these different kinds of sceptical target, then it will become clear that not all forms

it is contradictory. Basic epistemic norms, like moral norms (and logical norms), are justified not by being deduced from more fundamental norms (an obvious impossibility) but by their ability to sort specific, individual normative intuitions and other relevant data into the right barrels in an economical and illuminating way. The present skeptical observation is tautologous, and the attendant demand is contradictory.'

³⁹ Cf. Ayer, *The Problem of Knowledge*, 84: 'The problem of perception, as the sceptic poses it, is that of justifying our belief in the existence of the physical objects which it is commonly taken for granted that we perceive. In this, as in other cases, it is maintained that there is a gap, of a logically perplexing kind, between the evidence with which we start and the conclusions that we reach. If the conclusions are suspect, it is because of the way in which they seem to go beyond the evidence on which they depend. The starting-point of the argument is, as we have seen, that our access to the objects whose existence is in question must be indirect.'

⁴⁰ The fact that Ayer conceives of the threat of scepticism in deontological terms is perhaps surprising, given his more reliabilist account of justification in his analysis of knowledge. That there is some tension here is noted by John Foster, who remarks that 'as [Ayer] becomes more involved in the issue of scepticism, so his conception of justification changes from his original [reliabilist] position to that of the reason-furnishing account' (John Foster, *Ayer* (London: Routledge, 1985), 116).

of transcendental argument require the same kinds of commitment as others; some may therefore be weak enough to avoid certain standard objections, whilst still being strong enough to overcome one or other of the sceptical positions I have outlined. In the next chapter, these objections will be examined, whilst in Chapter 3 we will consider whether they apply to all forms of transcendental argument, or only to those used against certain kinds of sceptical target, but not others.

Transcendental Arguments: Objections

While the ‘official’ history of transcendental arguments goes back to Kant (though a case can be made for putting much earlier anti-sceptical strategies in this form), there was little critical discussion of them as such, independently of general considerations of Kant’s epistemology and metaphysics as a whole, until Strawson brought these arguments into prominence in the late 1950s and 1960s, with the publication of *Individuals* and his sympathetic reconstruction of Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* in *The Bounds of Sense*.¹ These works stimulated not only responses to Strawson’s own position, but at the same time led to fruitful rereadings of Wittgenstein (amongst others) as also addressing issues in these terms. It is a curious fact, however, that while transcendental arguments have since been used in the work of some of the most prominent contemporary philosophers (such as Davidson, Putnam, and Searle), in the literature *about* such arguments the attitude adopted is generally critical and defensive, the consensus being that Strawson raised hopes in the battle with scepticism that are really unfulfilled, a verdict now apparently accepted by Strawson himself.^{1 2}

Just as the contemporary infatuation with transcendental arguments can largely be traced back to the work of a specific individual, so too can the contemporary disillusionment. For, though others may have helped to turn the tide, the central objections to these arguments are voiced in or stem out of Barry Stroud’s 1968 article on this topic.³ These objections are not formal, but dialectical:

¹ P. F. Strawson, *Individuals: An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics* (London: Methuen, 1959); and *The Bounds of Sense: An Essay on Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason* (London: Methuen, 1966). Another work that made use of these arguments around this time was Sidney Shoemaker, *Self-Knowledge and Self-Identity* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1963).

² For Strawson’s more recent and modest position, see his *Skepticism and Naturalism*.

³ Barry Stroud, ‘Transcendental Arguments’, *Journal of Philosophy*, 65 (1968), 241–56. Another important, but to my mind less far-reaching, critic of transcendental arguments in the same period was Stephan Körner: for an outline of his position and references, see below, § 3.1.3.

they claim that, when used against the sceptic, transcendental arguments are ineffective as a strategy, since they are committed to more than the sceptic can be expected to concede. In particular, the problems highlighted as a result of Stroud's article are that they rest on verificationist assumptions (*the verificationism objection*)-, that they rely on some form of objectionable idealism (*the idealism objection*)-, and that they involve questionable modal claims (*the modal objection*). The difficulty is that, whilst it is open to the proponent of transcendental arguments to respond by accepting that this is so, and hence by endorsing verificationism or idealism or some sort of modal intuitionism, it is hard to see, in each case, how doing so does not undermine the effectiveness of the transcendental argument as a way of refuting the sceptic. These objections therefore relate not to specific examples of transcendental arguments, but to the whole approach as such, raising problems of principle and not just of individual execution.

In attempting to handle these objections, my approach will not be to try and answer them directly, but rather to try to finesse them: that is, to show that while they apply to some forms of transcendental argument as directed against certain forms of scepticism, they do not apply to others, and thus they do not immobilize all these arguments as a class. This approach will draw on the distinctions between varieties of scepticism outlined in the previous chapter, in order to leave space for distinct kinds of transcendental arguments to be deployed, not all of which (I will claim) require the kinds of problematic commitment that Stroud identifies. Before developing this approach, however, we must consider in more detail what these commitments are said to be, and how others have tried to render them less disabling, beginning with the verificationism objection.

2.1 THE VERIFICATIONISM OBJECTION

Of all the objections to transcendental arguments, this is the one that can be most directly and obviously associated with Stroud's 1968 article. His critique is developed in two stages:

First stage: Where S' is a proposition the truth of which is claimed to be a necessary condition for the possibility of experience or language (e.g. 'there is an external world'), Stroud claims that 'the sceptic can always very plausibly insist that it is enough to make

language possible if we *believe* that *S* is true, or if it looks for all the world as if it is, but that *S* needn't actually be true'.⁴

Second stage'. Therefore, Stroud argues, in order to bridge the gap between what we believe and how things are, it is necessary to claim that to coherently or meaningfully believe *S*, we must be able to determine the truth or falsity of *S*, and so establish a knowledge-claim regarding this proposition. But, Stroud points out, this is to invoke a version of verificationism, according to which a proposition can only be meaningful or intelligible to us, if we are able to confirm or disconfirm it.

From this, Stroud concludes that transcendental arguments are dialectically weak when used against scepticism. For, if verificationism must be *assumed* to make them work, they are redundant, as verificationism has sufficient anti-sceptical strength to refute scepticism on its own; and verificationism is a highly contestable position, which the sceptic can easily question. As Stroud puts it:

Any opposition to skepticism on this point would have to rely on the principle that it is not possible for anything to make sense unless it is possible for us to establish whether *S* is true, or, alternatively, that it isn't possible for us to understand anything at all if we know only what conditions make it look for all the world as if *S* is true, but which are still compatible with *S*'s falsity. The conditions for anything making sense would have to be strong enough to include not only our beliefs about what is the case, but also the possibility of our knowing whether those beliefs are true; hence the meaning of a statement would have to be determined by what we can *know*. But to prove this would be to prove some version of the verification principle, and then the skeptic will have been directly and conclusively refuted. Therefore, even when we deal in general with the necessary conditions of there being any language at all, it looks as if the use of so-called 'transcendental arguments' to demonstrate the self-defeating character of skepticism would amount to nothing more and nothing less than an application of some version of the verification principle, and if this is what a transcendental argument is then there is nothing special or unique, and certainly nothing new, about this way of attacking skepticism.⁵

In this way, Stroud convinced many that the proponent of transcendental arguments faces an unattractive dilemma: either to dispense with the verificationist assumption, and fall short of the required anti-sceptical conclusion concerning how things are, or to

⁴ Stroud, 'Transcendental Arguments', 255.

⁵ Ibid. 255-6.

accept verificationism and render the use of transcendental arguments redundant.

It might be thought, however, that not everything in Stroud's way of setting up this dilemma need be accepted, and indeed this is so (as I will show); but the force of Stroud's position, and the reason why it is so influential, is that in trying to avoid Stroud's dilemma we only come up against other equally powerful objections. Three alternatives might be considered.

First, as Quassim Cassam has noted, one could question the first stage of Stroud's argument, and his claim that the sceptic can 'very plausibly' assert that it is enough for experience or language to be possible that we must *believe* *S* to be true, and not that it actually *be* true. It is clear that if this weakening substitution in the premise of the argument is rejected, then no verificationist assumption will be needed later on, as the conclusion of the argument will then relate to how things are and not just to how we believe them to be. As Cassam puts it:

Once such a substitution has taken place, there will indeed be a gap to be bridged but the substitution will be resisted by the Kantian. He might insist, for example, that it is the *existence* of physical objects and not merely belief in their existence which constitutes a necessary condition for the possibility of experience, and if this is *true*, there will simply be no gap to be bridged, by the verification principle or otherwise.⁶

As Cassam recognizes, however, there is a price to be paid for adopting this first way out of Stroud's dilemma: namely, what grounds can we give for what is now a strong modal claim, about how things must be to make experience or language possible? This then raises the modal objection to transcendental arguments, to be discussed shortly; and unless this can be addressed satisfactorily, it appears we will be forced to make something like the weakening substitution and so be led back to Stroud's dilemma.

A second way of trying to avoid this fate would be to accept the weakening substitution, and so accept that transcendental arguments leave us with a gap between how we believe things to be and how they are, and then use some other means to bridge it, other than verificationism. One obvious candidate is some sort of *idealism*, according

⁶ Quassim Cassam, 'Transcendental Arguments, Transcendental Synthesis and Transcendental Idealism', *Philosophical Quarterly*, 37 (1987), 355-78, p. 356.

to which how things are is somehow determined by how we believe them to be, so that in establishing the latter we are at the same time establishing the nature of the former. The problem with this response, however, is that it plays into the hands of those who have suspected transcendental arguments of being committed to idealism all along, and who are critical of them as a result, in a way we shall also consider shortly; once again, therefore, unless this worry can be answered, it would seem that no real solution to Stroud's dilemma has been found, as for many a reliance on idealism is at least as bad as a reliance on verificationism. Another response is to look for a way of overcoming the gap between what we believe and how things are, but which is not idealist in inspiration. For example, it might be claimed that in order to have the belief that there are external objects, there must actually *be* some, otherwise my belief could not have the content it does; we would then be appealing to content externalism to get us a conclusion about how things are, not verificationism. However, this response is also problematic, partly because the realist may worry that content externalism will take him in an idealist direction (for example, towards an epistemic conception of truth), and partly because its own anti-sceptical credentials are in doubt, in ways that will also be discussed in what follows.

A third (and apparently most modest) way of responding to Stroud's dilemma would be to accept the weakening move, and so accept that transcendental arguments leave us with a gap between how we believe things to be and how they are, *and* to accept that this gap is real and that no sceptic-proof means to bridge it exists, but none the less to try and show that scepticism can be answered *without any such bridge needing to be found*. A response of this type is offered by Strawson in some of his more recent writings in this area, and is also favoured by Stroud himself, amongst others. Thus, put briefly, Strawson argues that, if a transcendental argument can establish what we must believe, this is enough to overturn scepticism, not in the sense of establishing that what we believe is true, but in the sense of *silencing* the sceptic, showing him that he cannot get us to doubt (for example) the existence of the external world.⁷ Though there are important differences, Stroud and others have endorsed this kind of argument from invulnerability, as

⁷ Cf. Strawson, *Skepticism and Naturalism*, 1-29.

having some sort of anti-sceptical force.⁸ My own favoured way of conceiving of transcendental arguments does not rely on the argument from invulnerability, but is still of this type, in so far as it takes this modest sort of response to Stroud, and does not attempt to bridge the gap between how things are and how we must believe them to be or how they must appear to us; rather, it takes claims about the latter on their own to be sufficient to do work against *some* kinds of scepticism, namely the kind of normativist justificatory scepticism we distinguished in the previous chapter. The difficulty, of course, for all such modest conceptions of transcendental arguments, is to show what their anti-sceptical force amounts to, and thus how transcendental arguments so conceived can still be made to do useful work.

Going back to distinctions between types of transcendental argument put forward in the Introduction,⁹ it may now be seen more clearly why drawing those distinctions is useful, as we can now recast the options forced on us by Stroud in the terminology used there: namely, in terms of *truth-directed*, *belief-directed*, *experience-directed*, and *concept-directed* transcendental arguments. Stroud's dilemma focuses on truth-directed transcendental arguments, which set out to establish that something is the case, and the force of his objection is to show that, *on their own*, all that transcendental arguments can establish is how we must believe things to be or how they must appear to us, and so they should be reworked in a belief-directed or experience-directed form. Now, assuming that Stroud's objection goes through, the question then is: can we find some unproblematic way of supplementing our belief-directed or experience-directed transcendental argument to get us to how things are? or, more modestly, should we abandon any such ambition, and try and show nevertheless how a transcendentially established conclusion about what we believe or about the content of our experience can still be made to count against the sceptic? As I have said, my own preference is for a version of the modest response; but such modesty is clearly only appealing *faute de mieux*. We must therefore first see why

⁸ Cf. Barry Stroud, 'Kantian Argument, Conceptual Capacities, and Invulnerability', in Paolo Parini (ed.), *Kant and Contemporary Epistemology* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1994), 231-51; and 'The Goal of Transcendental Arguments', in Robert Stern (ed.), *Transcendental Arguments: Problems and Prospects* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 155-72.

⁹ See above, § 0.2.

anything more ambitious seems likely to fail, by considering how these attempts to deal with Stroud's dilemma face either the idealist or modal objections or both, beginning with the former.

2.2 THE IDEALISM OBJECTION

In discussing the verificationism objection in the previous section, we saw that the difficulty raised for the proponent of transcendental arguments is not formal but dialectical: it seems that the transcendental argument has a conclusion that is too weak to refute the sceptic, but, if we appeal to anything like the verification principle to make it stronger, we render the transcendental claim redundant, while resting our position on an additional premise that the sceptic seems within his rights to reject. Now, the idealism objection is also dialectical, but it raises the opposite worry. For here, it is claimed that if transcendental arguments can only reach a conclusion about how things are by collapsing the appearance/reality divide in an idealist fashion, it now becomes possible for the sceptic to endorse the conclusion in a way that is too easy for him to *accept*, as what we want and what the sceptic denies is knowledge about mind-independent reality, where this divide is bridged although still remains in place. Behind this objection, therefore, stands the view that idealism cannot be involved in a *refutation* of scepticism, as it is itself a *form* of scepticism, in that it limits the knowable to what is mind-dependent;¹⁰ or, more weakly, the view that scepticism is only an interesting problem from a realist perspective, so that, if transcendental arguments turn out to rest on idealism, they are thereby again shown to be redundant, as, once idealism has been assumed,

¹⁰ Cf. Williams, *Unnatural Doubts*, 20: 'The sceptic denies that we can have knowledge of the real world (if there even is one), cutting us off from what Cavell calls "the world as such". Kant replies that such knowledge is visibly in our grasp, once we admit that, transcendently speaking, the real world is ideal. So whereas the sceptic tells us that we cannot have knowledge of real things, but only of appearances, the transcendental idealist, like his descendant the phenomenalist, tells us that we *can* have such knowledge, since talk about things *is* just elaborate appearance-talk. Not only is this an extraordinary opinion, it is not obvious why it should not be counted a form of scepticism.' Cf. also Barry Stroud, *The Significance of Philosophical Scepticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 167-9. For a more sympathetic treatment of the anti-sceptical possibilities of transcendental idealism, see Sebastian Gardner, *Kant and the Critique of Pure Reason* (London: Routledge, 1999). 194-5-

the problem that gives scepticism its interest (namely, can we know anything about a mind-independent reality?) has already been dissolved.¹¹

We have therefore seen in philosophical terms how it is natural for this worry regarding idealism to arise: for, once something like Stroud's weakening assumption is accepted, that the transcendental claim relates to how things must appear to us or how we must believe them to be, then it seems that only by becoming some sort of idealist, and giving up on the appearance/reality distinction at some level, can this be enough *also* to settle how things are in the world and hence answer scepticism. Moreover, this worry regarding the association between transcendental arguments and idealism may also be fuelled by important historical considerations: namely, that Kant can be credited as the inventor of transcendental arguments, and as such they are embedded in an idealist epistemology and metaphysics, from which they cannot be extricated and recast in a way that would prove satisfactory to any realist. As Bernard Williams has warned in responding to Sidney Shoemaker and Strawson: 'Some interpreters of Kant. . . perhaps pay insufficient attention to Kant's insistence that his transcendental arguments gave knowledge of how things must be only because the things were not things in themselves. The idealism was what was supposed to make the whole enterprise possible.'¹²

In response to this worry, however, it has been argued that transcendental arguments can be used to establish conclusions satisfactory to the realist, and, if Kant's writings suggest otherwise, this is

" Cf. Rorty's well-known claim that Davidson provides 'a transcendental argument to end all transcendental arguments', in so far as (on Rorty's controversial reading) Davidson has thereby established a kind of idealism (or at least anti-realism) which 'tears down the scaffolding upon which the standard paradigms of "realistic" transcendental arguments were mounted', by rendering their problematic empty. See Richard Rorty, 'Transcendental Arguments, Self-Reference, and Pragmatism', in Peter Bieri, Rolf-Peter Horstmann, and Lorenz Krüger (eds.), *Transcendental Arguments and Science* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1979), 77-103, p. 78.

¹² Bernard Williams, 'Knowledge and Meaning in the Philosophy of Mind', reprinted in his *Problems of the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 127-35, P- 128- Cf. also Bernard Williams, 'Wittgenstein and Idealism', reprinted in his *Moral Luck* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 144-63. More recently, Stroud has also emphasized how Kant's ambitious use of transcendental arguments rests on his idealism: see Barry Stroud, 'Kantian Argument, Conceptual Capacities, and Invulnerability', 234-5. See also Gardner, *Kant and the Critique of Pure Reason*, 189: 'Kant... makes it clear that his [transcendental] arguments are to be taken idealistically, and have force only on that understanding.'

because he was setting out to do much more than is needed to overcome scepticism. The key move here is to rethink Kant's so-called Copernican revolution in metaphysics, encapsulated in the well-known passage from the Preface to the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

Hitherto it has been assumed that all our knowledge must conform to objects. But all attempts to extend our knowledge of objects by establishing something in regard to them *a priori*, by means of concepts, have, on this assumption, ended in failure. We must therefore make trial whether we may not have more success in the tasks of metaphysics, if we suppose that objects must conform to our knowledge.¹³

In so far as transcendental arguments are seen as establishing what intuitive and conceptual structure is required in order to have experience, it is natural to take Kant's Copernican revolution as adding a further idealist step, in claiming that objects as we experience them are then made to 'conform' to this structure by the synthesizing subject, in a way that enables us to move from the conclusion of the transcendental argument to a claim about these objects. However, it is also possible to understand the Copernican revolution in a less idealist fashion (even if Kant himself did not). On this account, all it involves is the minimal Kantian claim, that in order for us to have experience there are certain conditions that what we experience must meet in order for us to find it comprehensible, and that these necessary conditions on our having experience can be established *a priori* using transcendental arguments. In this sense, objects (what we experience) must conform to whatever conditions are necessary if we are to have experience; and, by investigating these conditions, we can then know what objects are like *a priori*, given that we do have experience and are not just mentally 'blank'. In this way, it can be said that to establish certain truths about the world using transcendental arguments, we can argue from the fact that the world must conform to particular conditions in order to be experienceable by us, but we *do not* have to hold (with Kant) that *the way in which the world meets these conditions* is through any constitutive activity on our part, and so we are not required to treat these conditions as imposed by the mind on reality. Thus, it seems possible to accept the claim that transcendental

¹³ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Bxvi.

arguments require the Copernican revolution to get from how we must conceive things to how they are, by treating the former as conditions the latter must meet for us to be aware of them, but without endorsing the further idealist suggestion that they meet these conditions as the result of the activity of the synthesizing subject.

This way of arriving at a realist construal of transcendental arguments has been put forward by Ross Harrison, and endorsed more recently by Paul Guyer. Harrison puts the position as follows:

If... it is a necessary condition for our apprehension of a world that that world is causally connected together, then we may legitimately suppose that any world that we *do* apprehend is causally connected together. Supposing this does not prevent our also supposing that the object is quite independent of the medium, and would have existed in the way it does even if the medium had never been applied to it. Take the analogous case of visual perception. We know that it is a necessary condition of visual perception that objects reflect light, and hence that, *if* an object is perceived, then it must be the case that it reflects light. We move from knowledge of the medium by which the object is apprehended to a justifiable belief about the nature of the object. To do this, however, it is not necessary for us to suppose that the object depends, either for its existence or its nature, upon us or upon the medium of apprehension. For it is quite open for us to allow that the object would exist in exactly the same way, including its ability to reflect light, even if it was never perceived by anyone.¹⁴

¹⁴ Ross Harrison, 'Transcendental Arguments and Idealism', in Godfrey Vesey (ed.), *Idealism Past and Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 211-24, p. 222. Cf. also Ross Harrison, *On What There Must Be* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), 27: 'Although, therefore, Kant provides an example of the kind of argument to be used in the inquiry which follows, he gives a misleading impression of how such arguments operate. He is right in finding out how the world is, while using pure reason alone not by studying it directly in itself, but by turning our attention to the medium through which it can be known by us. By turning our attention from the object itself to the relation it has with us, we can discover which properties the object must possess. Assuming, that is, that the object is comprehensible, we can find out what its properties are by finding out what the essential conditions of any object being comprehensible to us are.' For Guyer, see Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 349: 'what is to exclude the possibility that we can indeed have *a priori* knowledge of spatial and temporal relations because we are acquainted with a feature of our own minds which *restricts* us to the experience of objects which are themselves spatial and temporal? Even if we know it *a priori*—indeed just because we know it *a priori*—why isn't the necessity that our experience be spatial and temporal decisive evidence that whatever objects we do in fact experience are themselves in compliance with this restriction or are experienced at all just *because* they are spatial and temporal? Why doesn't the indispensable role of space and time in our experience prove the transcendental realism rather than idealism of space and time themselves?' Cf. also Kenneth R. Westphal, 'Affinity,

In this way, it seems that transcendental claims can be used to get to a conclusion about how the world is, without requiring any dubious idealist manoeuvre.

The question then arises why it is that Kant himself did not see things in this way, and conceive of the Copernican revolution in this more realist manner. One suggestion Harrison makes is that Kant was not satisfied with making claims that relate merely to the hypothetical necessity of certain features of objects, namely those features objects must have *if* there is experience of them, as this apparently leaves it possible that these objects could have existed *without* possessing those features, as our having experience of them is (presumably) only contingent; but, Harrison claims, Kant felt the need to show that these features are *absolutely* (or categorically) necessary, such that these objects could not exist *at all* without them (not merely not exist in a way that makes them experienceable by us). Kant therefore made the features that make objects experienceable by us into conditions on their existence per se, and so treated them in an idealist fashion.¹⁵ Another suggestion that Harrison makes is that Kant was tempted into idealism, because he wished to provide some sort of explanation and guarantee of the fact that the objects *do* meet the conditions required in order for us to have experience of them, by treating ourselves as the source of that conformity, rather than just leaving it to chance or the way things (fortunately for us) happen to be.¹⁶ While taking these suggestions to explain Kant's drift into idealism, Harrison however rejects them as grounds for following him, arguing that neither of Kant's goals needs to be met if we are to secure our primary objective, which is to arrive at contingent but sceptic-proof knowledge of how things are.

It is difficult not to feel some sympathy with Harrison on both these diagnostic points. As regards the first, it is tempting to think that much of the project of the *Critique* is distorted by Kant's attempt to secure the strongly modal claims of traditional metaphysics

Idealism, and Naturalism: The Stability of Cinnabar and the Possibility of Experience', *Kant-Studien*, 88 (1997), 130-89, esp. pp. 147-55. Essentially the same point had been made earlier by A. C. Ewing in his *Idealism: A Critical Survey* (London: Methuen, 1934), 79-81. All of these positions are variants on the 'neglected alternative' objection made by Friedrich Adolf Trendelenburg in his *Logische Untersuchungen* (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1862), 163.

¹⁵ See Harrison, 'Transcendental Arguments and Idealism', 217-18. Cf. also Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge*, 367-9.

¹⁶ Harrison, 'Transcendental Arguments and Idealism', 222-3.

and that, once such ambitions have been abandoned, some of the motivation for transcendental idealism is lost. As regards the second, Harrison's case is eloquently and persuasively elaborated by Cassam as follows:

It just so happens that appearances do, as a matter of fact, provide a basis for the unity of consciousness, but for all that has been said so far, it is plain that appearances might not have done so, and there is no guarantee that they will continue to do so. There is evidently a certain insecurity in such a position, and this is precisely what Kant found unacceptable. From the present perspective, it is simply a happy coincidence that nature should direct itself according to the subjective ground of apperception; Kant, in contrast, required that it should be no accident that appearances should fit together into a connected whole of human knowledge. This, as noted, is the force of Kant's talk of the association of appearances having some objective ground, and given this requirement, it is easy to see that the adoption of some form of idealism is the only way of satisfying it. For if nature were a thing in itself, then it would be entirely accidental that appearances should fit into a connected whole of human knowledge, but this cannot be deemed to be accidental, *therefore* nature cannot be a thing in itself, and it can be known *a priori* that it will accord with the unity of apperception. It is only because nature is a mere aggregate of appearances, and because the association of appearances is the product of a special form of synthesis, namely, transcendental synthesis, that we can be certain that nature will continue, as it were, to play the game by our rules ... These various lines of thought are well expressed in the following passage:

That nature should direct itself according to our subjective ground of apperception . . . sounds very strange and absurd. But when we consider that this nature is not a thing in itself but is merely an aggregate of appearances, we shall not be surprised that we can discover it.. . only in transcendental apperception ... Nor shall we be surprised that just for this reason this unity can be known *a priori*, and therefore as necessary. ([Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*] At 14)

... The appropriate response [to Kant] is surely the following:... It is, throughout, an unargued assumption of Kant's that there should, in effect, be some guarantee that appearances will fit into the 'connected whole of human knowledge', but it is surely appropriate to wonder whether a guarantee on this matter ought to be sought. There are two distinct questions to be considered in the present context: what must appearances be like if they are to provide a basis for the unity of consciousness? Secondly, *why* are appearances such as to provide for the unity of consciousness? The first of these, it may be granted, is a legitimate philosophical question, but it is far from clear that the second is a question with which philosophy is obliged

to concern itself. It is enough . . . that appearances *do* conform to the conditions for the unity of apperception; they might not have done and they might not continue to do so, and whilst this might give rise to a certain sense of insecurity, this degree of insecurity simply has to be tolerated.¹⁷

As before, I am prepared to accept the case being made here, that some of Kant's motives for moving towards idealism were misplaced, and a more contemporary reconstruction (which, for example, appeals to evolutionary considerations to explain why the conditions of our experience are met by many of the things in the world¹⁸) need not share them.

None the less, if this contextualization of Kant's project goes some way to undermine the historical case that there is an indissoluble link between transcendental arguments and idealism, the realist must also show us that his account achieves our required philosophical goals as well, in order to be convincing. For, as we have seen, whatever one's reservations, idealism at least provides a clear way of getting from the conclusion of a weakened transcendental claim to how things are, by closing the gap between the latter and how things appear to us; is it genuinely the case that the realist can put forward a plausible transcendental claim, and, while preserving this gap, still get from a claim about the conditions of experience to the nature of a mind-independent world in a way that the sceptic cannot easily dispute?

In order to see the difficulties faced by the realist in this respect, consider the following example of the sort of transcendental argument seemingly endorsed by Harrison:

- (i) We have comprehensible experience.
- (2) We can only have comprehensible experience if the world is causally ordered.
- Therefore
- (3) The world is causally ordered.

¹⁷ Cassam, 'Transcendental Arguments, Transcendental Synthesis and Transcendental Idealism', 369-70.

¹⁸ Cf. Harrison, 'Transcendental Arguments and Idealism', 223-4. Cf. also Westphal, 'Affinity, Idealism, and Naturalism', 153: 'However, neither Kant nor Allison consider the kind of naturalistic alternative I sketched above, that our cognitive apparatus is such that we are only receptive, sensitive, or cognitively competent with regard to certain kinds of objects, although these objects would have the properties (whatever they may be) that enable us to experience them, whether or not we existed or experienced them. This naturalistic alternative is of course much more obvious after Darwin.'

This argument is clearly valid: the first premise is unexceptionable, and the conclusion goes through with no additional idealist step. However, the problem lies with the second premise. For, it will be remembered, idealist difficulties are created for transcendental arguments not at once, but when we allowed Stroud to suggest that the sceptic can ‘very plausibly’ insist that the transcendental claim relates not to how things *are*, but how they must *appear to us* to be, or how we must *believe them* to be. The realist must therefore block this step, as otherwise his argument can be reformulated as follows, in a way that now *does* seem to require an additional premise, at (4’):

(i’) We have comprehensible experience.

(2’) We can only have comprehensible experience of a world that appears to us to be causally ordered.

Therefore

(3’) The world as it appears to us is causally ordered.

(4’) The world is constituted by how it appears to us.

Therefore

(5’) The world is causally ordered.

Thus, while Harrison may claim in (2) that we could not have comprehensible experience of the world unless it were causally ordered, the sceptic can make Stroud’s weakening substitution (2’), and argue that all the second premise should state is that the world as it *appears* must be causally ordered, if we are to have any comprehensible experience of it; and, once the second premise is weakened in this way, an appearance/reality gap opens up which the realist has not told us how to cross or close.

In this way, therefore, it can be claimed that idealism does seem to be required after all: for, whilst the sceptic can agree that given our cognitive constitution the world may have to satisfy some constraints in order to be experienceable by us, he can argue (with the transcendental idealist) that those constraints only govern how the world needs to appear, and not how it needs to be, if we are to find it comprehensible.¹⁹ This is the real difficulty for the realist: the force

¹⁹ Cf. Robert B. Pippin, ‘The Idealism of Transcendental Arguments’, *Idealistic Studies*, 18 (1988), 97-106, pp. 99-100: ‘One suspects it might be hard indeed, for Harrison or for Kant, to show that it must be the case that the *world* is such and such in order for us to judge at all, without somehow slipping into a construal of what it is for something to *be* a world that does not introduce a variety of idealism

of Kantian idealism is to allow for the possibility that even in a world that is not *in itself* causally ordered, spatio-temporal, and so on, our cognitive constitution is such that we can still have comprehensible experience in so far as it *appears* causally ordered, spatio-temporal, etc. to us. In a sense, therefore, our cognitive constitution is not constrained *enough* to make the realist argument work. Consider an analogy: if our cognitive constitution were very limited, such that we could only perceive a world if it were *actually* coloured, then we could conclude on this basis that when we do perceive a world, it *is* coloured; but, in fact, our cognitive constitution is not that limited, and it is enough for us to perceive a world as long as it *appears* coloured to us. Likewise, the idealist claims that though our cognitive constitution does have certain constraints, it is flexible enough (as it were) to give us comprehensible experience of a world, without that world actually having to *be* any determinate way. Thus, while Harrison is inclined to say that, unless the world really were causally ordered, we could not have comprehensible experience, and so would be ‘condemned to silence’, the idealist can claim that we could still operate cognitively as long as it *appeared* causally ordered to us, just as we can still have perceptual experience of a world that is not itself coloured, as long as it continues to appear so.

However, it might be observed at this point that both the verificationism and idealism objections have relied on the endorsement of the first stage of Stroud’s argument, regarding the plausibility of the weakening substitution, from ‘X must be the case’ to ‘we must believe X to be the case’, or ‘X must appear to be the case’, and the consequent switch from a truth-directed to a belief-directed or experience-directed transcendental claim; for it is this that has

(say, when the world in question turns out to be a world of “appearances”). Likewise, arguing from the more restricted premise that we are able to make judgments (able to assert something that can be true or false) to any claim about what we must *assume* to be true of the world, would still seem to involve a form of idealism. (We are not establishing anything about the world itself, but only about the world-qua-possible-object-of-human-judgment.) Indeed, unless we are shown how the world’s being causally ordered is *more* than “a presupposition for *our* judgmental ability”, we are still left with the kind of *limited* claim that would rightly look to a skeptic like a form of idealism that is compatible with his skepticism ... We can see this by simply noting that the skeptic (always the radical realist) could still admit: yes, we do make judgments, and yes, it is a necessary condition of judgments that we assume the world is causally ordered ... [But] it is certainly logically possible that what is required *for* judgment not be true of the world in itself.’

opened up the appearance/reality gap that has caused so much trouble. The realist may therefore take his cue from this, and just deny that this substitution *is* plausible in the case of a genuine transcendental argument.

Certainly there seem to be cases where the realist is right to insist that the sceptic will find it difficult to make the weakening substitution. Consider, for example, Descartes's *Cogito* in these terms, as it arguably has the right central characteristics, namely, it begins from an apparently undeniable premise; it is regressive; and it can be taken to be based on the claim that existence is a necessary condition for the possibility of thought, and not just on the syllogistic major premise, 'everything that thinks, exists'.²⁰ Let us therefore cast the *Cogito* as a transcendental argument, as follows:

- (1) I think.
- (2) In order to think, it is necessary to exist.
Therefore
- (3) I exist.

Now, put as a transcendental argument in this form, it is very difficult to weaken the conclusion of the argument, along lines that lead to the idealist position, because this requires weakening the premise 'In order to think, it is necessary for what thinks to exist', to something like 'In order to think, it is necessary for what thinks to appear to exist', which seems unintelligible. Of course, the conclusion can be weakened in another way, by weakening the first premise, from 'I think' to 'There is thinking going on': but this does not push the argument in an *idealist* direction.

It therefore seems that the possibility of constructing an argument that makes a realist transcendental claim regarding how things must be in order for us to have experience cannot be ruled out at this stage; and, if such an argument *can* be constructed, then it will not face Stroud's dilemma, in so far as the weakening substitution cannot be made to the transcendental claim. Before taking our difficulties to be resolved, however, we must turn to the third criticism of transcendental arguments, which relates to their distinctive modal claim; unfortunately, this will show that problems regarding truth-directed transcendental arguments still remain.

²⁰ Cf. Bernard Williams, *Descartes* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978), 90-1.

2.3 THE MODAL OBJECTION

In characterizing the nature of transcendental arguments in the Introduction, it was noted that they are distinctive in involving a certain sort of modal claim. On the one hand, examples of claims to the effect that *X* is a necessary condition of experience do not appear to be reducible to *analytic* necessity, to be necessary by virtue of the meaning of the terms involved (cf.: for this box to be white, it must be coloured). On the other hand, such claims do not appear to be best interpreted as involving *natural* necessity, to be necessary by virtue of the causal laws governing the world as it happens to be (cf.: for there to be human beings, there must be oxygen for them to breathe). It therefore appears that transcendental claims fall into a third class, alongside so-called metaphysically or conceptually necessary truths, such as ‘nothing can be red or green all over’, or ‘nothing can be in two different places at the same time’.

Now, as before, at its most general the modal objection can be used to expose the dialectical weakness of transcendental arguments. The difficulty is, if the intention is to use a transcendental argument to convince the sceptic that something is the case, then we need to show that transcendental arguments are somehow less epistemologically problematic than other grounds we might give for believing what the sceptic doubts; but, because they involve claims to metaphysical necessity, this is clearly not the case; so transcendental arguments put us in no better position *vis-à-vis* the sceptic than any other approach. For, if the sceptic will not endorse our right to make knowledge-claims about the external world or the past or other people because he thinks we are not in a position to establish such facts satisfactorily in the normal way (through perception, inductive inference, or whatever), then it is hard to see how we can settle his concerns using a transcendental argument, if such arguments rest on a claim regarding particular metaphysically necessary facts, the epistemic legitimacy of which the sceptic is likely to question just as strongly.

Thus, if the sceptic we are concerned with is an epistemic infallibilist, who denies we know anything about the external world because perceptual experience is not error-proof, it seems he can equally well claim that we do not know the kind of metaphysical dependencies the transcendental argument relies on, for our cognitive access to such facts seems equally fallible. The difficulty here is

that whilst we might claim infallibility as regards analytically necessary truths, based on our awareness of the meaning of the terms involved, in the case of metaphysically necessary truths, we seem to rely merely on the apparent inconceivability of the opposite; and it is hard to make a case for the infallibility of this kind of modal intuition, which (the sceptic will claim) could easily be circumscribed by our conceptual, representational, or experiential limitations, making this a highly dubious guide to whether *X* really is a metaphysically necessary condition for the possibility of *K*²¹

On the other hand, even if the sceptic is a fallibilist, he might still argue that we should doubt whether we have any true beliefs about such metaphysical necessities, just as he might say we should doubt whether we have any true beliefs about the external world, given what would seem to be required of us as cognizers to have such knowledge, and how unlikely this seems for creatures like us. Colin McGinn has put the general sceptical worry here as follows:

The third-person route to scepticism arises from the recognition that we are just one small part of a much more extensive world. Our existence is contingent, a result of random mutation and natural selection; we occupy a particular and tiny region of space for an all too finite stretch of time; our knowledge is confined to what the world happens to offer to our sensitive surfaces and what our brains can interpret. Objectively considered, we are just limited biological creatures, constructing a view of what lies outside us on the basis of the fragmentary data that come our way. Once we absorb the fact that we are beings *in* the world, with certain restricted receptivities and powers, and with only those few pounds of neural meat to rely on, then we must wonder whether we are really in a position to form an objective picture of the world outside us. For why should that vast independent world yield up its secrets to squirming evolutionary parvenus such as ourselves? Is it not just luck if our brains allow us an accurate representation of the world as it exists independently of us? Is not our so-called knowledge bound to reflect our specific constitution, biological needs, subjective biases? Naturalistically considered, we are far from Godlike, epistemically and otherwise. Scepticism is thus the only realistic—the only *scientific* attitude to adopt. Pretensions to objective knowledge are mere hubris, stemming from reluctance to accept that we are nature's creatures—and not the other way about.²²

²¹ Cf. J. L. Mackie, *The Cement of the Universe*, reprint edn. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 79: 'Only the limits of our imaginations . . . make what is pervasively actual seem essential.'

²² Colin McGinn, *Problems in Philosophy* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1993), 108-9. Cf. also Thomas Nagel, *The View From Nowhere* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), ch. 5.

Now, if *this* is the sceptic's point, it is hard to see how he can then be brought to accept that we can use a transcendental argument to show something to be the case, as the capacity of our modal intuitions to give us knowledge of the sort of metaphysical necessity on which these arguments are based would presumably be seen by him to be just as mysterious (if not more so) as the capacity of our perceptual apparatus to give us knowledge of the external world.²³

In response to this difficulty, it might be argued that the sceptical worry is misplaced, as it derives from a strongly realist conception of what makes such metaphysical necessities hold, namely subject-independent constraints on how things can be, where it is this subject-independence that generates the epistemological mystery of how such constraints could be grasped by creatures like us. A response of this sort merely leads to a dilemma, however. For, if we try to ease the epistemological puzzle, by saying in an anti-realist or projectivist manner, that inconceivability-to-us *is* a sufficient guide to metaphysical necessity, as this is what such modal facts consist in,²⁴ the sceptic can then open up a relativist worry, by suggesting

²³ Cf. Stroud, 'Kantian Argument, Conceptual Capacities and Invulnerability', 234: 'Even if we can allow that we can come to see how our thinking in certain ways necessarily requires that we also think in certain other ways, and so perhaps in certain further ways as well, and we can appreciate how rich and complicated the relations among those ways of thinking must be, how can truths about the world which appear to say or imply nothing about human thought or experience be shown to be genuinely necessary conditions of such psychological facts as that we think and experience things in certain ways, from which the proofs begin? It would seem that we must find, and cross, a bridge of necessity from the one to the other. That would be a truly remarkable feat, and some convincing explanation would surely be needed of how the whole thing is possible.'

²⁴ Cf. Simon Blackburn, *Spreading the Word* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 216-17: 'Projectivism is also a promising option in the theory of logical necessity. We not only believe it to be true that $7 + 5 = 12$, but we also find the truth inexorable: it could not have been otherwise. We cannot imagine it otherwise; we could make nothing of a way of thought that denied it. But this may be just a fact about us and the limitations of our present imaginations, and it is natural to complain that this fact cannot justify us in saying that the proposition *has* to be true, or is true in all logically possible worlds. One reaction would be to avoid saying this, and eschew the category of logically necessary truth: this is Quine's position. But another is to face the fact that such truths do occupy a special category, for we can easily imagine otherwise many of our most cherished beliefs, and to say that when we dignify a truth as necessary we are expressing our own mental attitude—in this case our own inability to make anything of a possible way of thinking which denies it. It is this blank unimaginability which we voice when we use the modal vocabulary. It is then natural to fear that this has nothing to do with the *real* modal status of propositions. (Compare: what have our sentiments to do with the *real* moral truth about things?) But the quasi-realist will fight this contrast: he will deny that anything more can be

that other creatures might find the opposite *equally* inconceivable, or we ourselves might find the inconceivability 'lessen' at some later time. If, on the other hand, we try to avoid such relativist worries by sticking to a thoroughly realist conception of metaphysical necessity as somehow 'fixed' in the world independently of us, the sceptic can then return to his original epistemological point, and question what reason we have got to think that inconceivability-to-us should allow us to have knowledge of facts of this sort. Cassam has put forward something like this dilemma as follows:

If the Kantian eschews talk of analyticity and appeals instead to a notion of non-analytic, 'conceptual' necessity, he will need to explain what this alleged necessity consists in. At one point in *The Bounds of Sense* [p. 271], Strawson raises the question of how it is possible to establish that experience *must* exhibit such-and-such general features, and replies that 'this is just an abbreviated way of saying that we can form no coherent or intelligible conception of a type of experience which does not exhibit those features'. If it is claimed that we cannot form an intelligible conception of a kind of experience which does not exhibit a feature F because it is *necessary* that experience should exhibit F, then clearly no explanatory progress has been made. If, on the other hand, Strawson's remark is read as suggesting that the 'must' is to be thought of as reflecting our imaginative limitations, what is to prevent the sceptic from retorting that such an account merely undermines the hardness of the 'must'? To paraphrase a remark of Crispin Wright's in a different context, if we cannot conceive of experience not exhibiting F, then that is how things are with us; is it not a further tendentious step to inflate our imaginative limitations into a metaphysical discovery?²⁵

Moreover, even if concerns of this sort can be answered, a worry about the modal commitments of transcendental arguments can be raised at a less general level. This worry can be made clear by returning once again to Stroud's objection to transcendental arguments, and his claim that the sceptic can always 'very plausibly' make the

meant by the real modal status of a proposition, than can be understood by seeing it as a projection of our (best) attitude of comprehension or imagination towards it. Once again, the advantage of such a theory is that it avoids the mystery of a necessity-detecting faculty and it avoids the strained scepticism which tries to avoid admitting that any truths are necessary at all.' Cf. also Blackburn, 'Morals and Modals', reprinted in his *Essays in Quasi-Realism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 52-74.

²⁵ Cassam, 'Transcendental Arguments, Transcendental Synthesis and Transcendental Idealism', 377-8.

weakening substitution, and insist that it is enough for language or experience to be possible that we must believe things to be a certain way, or that the world must appear to us to be a certain way, without these beliefs or appearances actually corresponding to how things really are. Now, it is arguable that what *makes* these weakening substitutions plausible in many if not all examples of transcendental arguments is precisely the strength of the modal claim involved, so that it is the latter which allows the sceptic to make the move which then leads to the apparent shortcoming in the conclusion, to which verificationism and/or idealism appear to be the only responses. For, while there may be *some* cases (as we found in the *Cogito*) where the transcendental argument does seem to establish how things must be in order to make experience possible, in many cases the sceptic can respond by arguing that this is too strong, and that it is only necessary that we *believe* things to be a certain way, or that they *appear* to us to be so. Thus, for example, to the suggestion that consciousness in others is a necessary condition for consciousness in me, the other-minds sceptic can respond by saying that this modal claim is implausible, and that all that is necessary is that I should be surrounded by creatures to whom I can *ascribe* consciousness, even if they are in fact cleverly constituted robots. In cases of this sort it is not that the appeal to inconceivability as such is being objected to by the sceptic, as a source of modal knowledge; rather, he is exploiting the fact that what we can conceive here shows that experience or language can be made possible by much less than we seem to need in order to refute his position. It would therefore seem that the proponent of the realist version of a truth-directed transcendental argument faces the difficulty that those arguments can be rejected as too ambitious, as the modal claim can be reduced to a claim about what must be believed or how things must appear, so that (as Stroud argued) the only way of using a truth-directed transcendental argument is to add some sort of verificationist or idealist premise, to close the gap between this more modest claim and a conclusion about how things are.²⁶

²⁶ This would appear to be the way in which Stroud might defend himself against a recent criticism of his position by Anthony Brueckner (see Anthony Brueckner, 'Transcendental Arguments from Content Externalism', in Robert Stern (ed.), *Transcendental Arguments: Problems and Prospects* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 229-50, P- 230). Against Stroud's claim that transcendental arguments involve idealism, Brueckner has pointed out that for the anti-sceptical content-externalist this

2.4 PROSPECTS

This concludes my overview of the objections to transcendental arguments that stem from Stroud's 1968 paper. It would be natural to expect that, after such an onslaught, the proponent of transcendental arguments would either set out to answer these objections, or, if he cannot, concede defeat and agree with Cassam that 'given the quite formidable difficulties which they face, the prospect of mounting a successful defence of transcendental arguments seems dauntingly unpromising'.²⁷ This, however, is not what has happened: for, whilst many have accepted that Stroud's objections cannot be answered as they stand, they have continued to hold that a role for transcendental arguments can still be found against which the objections lose their force. Thus, as we have already observed, the strategy has largely been to *accept* Stroud's weakening substitution, and allow that all a transcendental argument can set out to establish is what must be believed or how things must appear, *and* to accept that there is no bridge from this to how things are without relying on verificationism or idealism, *but* to claim that we can overcome the sceptic without attempting to cross this bridge, and so can rest content with the modesty of belief-directed, experience-directed, or concept-directed transcendental arguments, whilst abandoning truth-directed transcendental arguments as overly ambitious. In various forms, this modest approach has been adopted recently by Strawson, A. C. Grayling, Cassam, Ralph Walker, and Stroud himself.²⁸

is not immediately so: for 'according to the anti-sceptical content externalist, the existence of content-bearing mental states requires that non-psychological reality be a certain way. But its being that way is not *constituted* by some sustaining psychological reality.' However, Stroud could accept this point, but go on to argue that the modal claim made by the content-externalist is just too strong, as it is possible for our mental states to have the content they do in a less world-involving way; and it is if *this* point is accepted that the need to make some sort of idealist move arises, in order to overcome the gap between mind and world that has been reintroduced by this weakening move.

²⁷ Cassam, 'Transcendental Arguments, Transcendental Synthesis and Transcendental Idealism', 378.

²⁸ Cf. Strawson, *Skepticism and Naturalism*; A. C. Grayling, *The Refutation of Scepticism* (London: Duckworth, 1985); Cassam, 'Self-Directed Transcendental Arguments'; Ralph C. S. Walker, 'Induction and Transcendental Argument', in Robert Sten (ed.), *Transcendental Arguments: Problems and Prospects* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 13-30; Stroud, 'Kantian Argument, Conceptual Capacities, and Invulnerability' and 'The Goal of Transcendental Arguments'.

In what follows, I will also defend a modest conception of transcendental arguments along these lines, but one which (beyond this) differs from that proposed by others. It is clear that any defence of such an approach must do two things: it must show that it can avoid the force of the objections we have considered in this chapter; and it must also show that in switching from truth-directed to transcendental arguments of a more modest type, it is not trying to do too much with too little, in that scepticism can only be properly addressed by transcendental arguments of the more ambitious kind. I will argue that those others who have adopted a modest approach have not done enough to settle these worries, to a large extent because they have failed to distinguish clearly what the sceptical target for such modest transcendental arguments should be; they have then either failed to engage properly with scepticism at all, or have attempted to do too much with too little and have fallen short as before. By making use of the distinctions developed in the previous chapter, I hope to find a use for modest transcendental arguments in a way that avoids both these shortcomings.

We therefore have a clear way to proceed: namely, to consider the range of sceptical positions outlined in the previous chapter, in order to gauge which need to be addressed by truth-directed transcendental arguments, and which can be addressed by transcendental arguments of a more modest sort, which only attempt to establish what must be believed or how things must appear or in what context certain concepts must be grasped. It could turn out, of course, that *no* sceptical positions can be countered in this modest way, in which case (given the force of Stroud's objections against anything more ambitious) we would be obliged to accept Cassam's gloomy conclusion, and abandon transcendental arguments altogether. I hope to show, however, that while some forms of scepticism remain immune, an important and highly interesting type of sceptical position can be subject to telling criticism using such modest transcendental arguments, showing how these arguments can help us avoid total capitulation to the sceptic's critique.

Transcendental Arguments: Strategies

In this chapter, I will draw on the results of the preceding two, and consider how far the kinds of scepticism highlighted in Chapter 1 (epistemic scepticism, reliabilist justificatory scepticism, and normativist justificatory scepticism) require to be met by the types of transcendental argument we have distinguished (truth-directed, belief-directed, experience-directed, and concept-directed), given the conclusion of Chapter 2, that truth-directed transcendental arguments face insuperable difficulties. Thus, if it turns out that a particular form of scepticism can *only* be met using a transcendental argument of the truth-directed type, then we would have to conclude that transcendental arguments cannot be of any use in overcoming scepticism of that form; and if it turns out that this is true of *all* of the forms of scepticism we have specified, then (since the list seems exhaustive), we would have to conclude that transcendental arguments cannot be used to counter scepticism at all. If, on the other hand, it turns out that one or other of the forms of scepticism specified *can* be met by one or other of the weaker kinds of transcendental argument which do not face the difficulties raised by Stroud, then a workable role for transcendental arguments against scepticism will have been found. The aim of this chapter is therefore to examine in a general way how various forms of scepticism and various types of transcendental argument ‘line up’, to see if there are any anti-sceptical strategies that use these arguments in a way that does not leave them open to the standard objections, by allowing them to be used in one of the more modest (non-truth-directed) forms.

3.1 TRANSCENDENTAL ARGUMENTS AND EPISTEMIC SCEPTICISM

As a response to the epistemic sceptic, I will consider three transcendental argument strategies: the *foundationalist strategy*, the *strong*

criteriological strategy, and the *framework strategy*. The first uses truth-directed transcendental arguments, whilst the other two attempt to respond to this sort of sceptic using transcendental arguments of a more modest type.

3. / . 1 The foundationalist strategy

If it is natural to take transcendental arguments to be truth-directed (as it probably is),¹ this is because it is equally natural to take their target to be the epistemic sceptic, who claims that we fail to have any knowledge at all (global scepticism), or to have some sort of knowledge in particular, such as knowledge of the external world, other minds, or the past (local scepticism). As we have seen, if this form of scepticism is to be distinguished from justificatory scepticism, ‘knowledge’ here must be being used in a way that requires more than just justified true belief; the epistemic sceptic will therefore characteristically claim that the belief must be *certain* in some sense, and challenge us to show how this can be so. ‘Certainty’ here can be construed in a variety of ways: but if certainty is taken to mean *infallibility* or *immunity to error*, it is most common to respond in what I will characterize as *foundationalist* terms, either by trying to show that *p* (the proposition said to be known) is a necessary truth, or by trying to show that we can provide conclusive grounds for *p*, which leave no room for error over whether or not *p* is the case. The former strategy is inappropriate with respect to the beliefs the sceptic questions, so the latter is generally taken to be the right approach in refuting the sceptic; and it is then natural to suppose that a transcendental argument must be truth-directed: that is, it must ¹

¹ Cf. the recent ‘textbook’ presentation of transcendental arguments in Weintraub, *The Sceptical Challenge*, 51: ‘If transcendental arguments purport to show something is constitutive of (some aspect of) reality, one might be tempted to wield them immodestly. If a condition, X, is necessary for experience (thought, language, etc.), then one could argue from the (very minimal) assumption that there is experience (thought, language) to the truth of X.’ Cf. also Patricia Kitcher, *Kant’s Transcendental Psychology* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 27-8: ‘The new method of transcendental philosophy is supposed to be the “transcendental argument”. Transcendental arguments are intended to refute skepticism of the potent Cartesian variety. They start by assuming only the experience of a self-identical being. Their special characteristic is that they ensnare skeptics in self-contradiction. Once a skeptic grants that he has experience, an analysis of the concept of a possible experience shows that it is part of the meaning of “experience” that the proposition the skeptic doubts must also be true.’

be used to establish the truth of p in a conclusive way, by deducing p from premises that are themselves certain.

Thus, when taken up by the anti-sceptical foundationalist in this manner, transcendental arguments are used to show that in the case of some propositions (e.g. that other minds exist, or that there is an external world), we are able to deduce them logically from a proposition which is certain (e.g. that I am having thoughts of a specific kind); and given that even the epistemic sceptic cannot question these propositions or the laws of logic, he must admit that there is no room for error, and thus that the former propositions are ones that we can legitimately claim to know on the basis of the latter. The argument is supposed to work by taking some incorrigible psychological fact about us as the first premise (e.g. that I am thinking that X , or have concept Y), and adding to this the transcendental claim that Z is a necessary condition for this fact obtaining, from which the existence of Z can be deduced, where Z is whatever the sceptic claims is uncertain. Thus, given that we can establish Z to be the case in such a manner, we make it impossible for the sceptic to claim that our belief regarding Z is based on inconclusive grounds, and so to assert that our knowledge-claim in this regard is unwarranted.

However, since the way in which the transcendental argument is being used against the sceptic here is truth-directed, and given the objections raised against such arguments in the previous chapter, it is not surprising that the sceptic can exploit these objections to undermine this foundationalist strategy. The most obvious difficulty is a dialectical one, and relates to the modal objection: namely, whilst the argument form is deductively valid, in order to convince the epistemic sceptic that we have excluded any possibility of error, we need to argue for the transcendental claim in a way that will satisfy him, by establishing that this second premise is itself certain. The sceptic, however, can now question our grounds for this transcendental claim, by arguing that it can only be made on the basis of what we can conceive, but that it is surely plausible to suppose that there are metaphysical possibilities that go beyond our powers of modal conception, so that perhaps q could be true without p being true. Moreover, even if we attempt to answer this point in an anti-realist manner, and close this gap between what our modal intuitions tell us and what the modal facts are by framing the latter in terms of the former, the sceptic can still challenge our certainty regarding the transcendental claim in another way, by questioning how we can

be sure that this claim *is* based on genuine inconceivability and not just on unimaginability.² Thus, given that the epistemic sceptic is unlikely to accept that we have good grounds for treating the second premise as indubitable, he will argue that we have no way of using a transcendental argument in this foundationalist manner.

It might be said, however, that these difficulties should not be overstated: for, in order to be convincing, the sceptic must do more than just point to the *bare possibility* of error here; he must also give us real grounds for doubting the transcendental claim that *p* is a necessary condition for the possibility of *q*, either by making it conceivable to us that *q* could occur without *p*, or by showing that we could have mistaken unimaginability for inconceivability in this case. It seems to me, however, that the sceptic could accept this objection, but go on to argue that certain structural difficulties with the foundationalist strategy being used here mean that he will always be in a position to do more than just allege fallibility: he will also be able to show how *q* is conceivable with less than *p*, and thus make the sort of weakening substitution (from *p* to the *appearance* or *belief that p*) that lies at the heart of Stroud's objection to transcendental arguments, regarding the transcendental claim.

The structural difficulty is one that besets all foundationalist responses to the epistemic sceptic, and is this: how do we find a first premise that is both certain, *and* sufficiently contentful to enable us to construct anything of anti-sceptical value upon it? The difficulty is nicely set out by Jonathan Dancy as follows:

The less ... content [a belief has], the less the risk, and greater the chance of infallibility. It seems probable, then, that a belief can only be genuinely

² For this distinction between inconceivability and unimaginability, see Blackburn, 'Morals and Modals', 68-70. As Blackburn recognizes, this distinction means that the anti-realist still has no sceptic-proof argument for certainty. 'We have arrived at the residual class of propositions of whose truth we can make nothing. We cannot see our failure to make anything of them as the result of contingent limitation in our own experience, nor of a misapprehension making us think that their truth should be open to display in a way in which it need not be. We express ourselves by saying that they cannot be true—that their negations are necessary. There is the bare possibility of being shown wrong—perhaps our search into the causes of our imaginative block was inadequate, or perhaps we were under a misapprehension of what it might be for the proposition to be true. We may be uncomfortably aware of even great philosophers who mistakenly projected what turn out to be rectifiable limitations of the imagination—the *a priori* has a bad history. But as Wright notices, we should have no wish to make ourselves infallible when deeming things *a priori*. We make the commitment in the light of the best we can do' (ibid. 70).

infallible if it has no content at all. This is the strong fallibilist conclusion. But even if this conclusion is not justified, we can say that infallible beliefs must have vanishingly small content. And the point of this is that the infallible beliefs are intended, within the programme of classical foundationalism, to act as those by appeal to which all others are to be justified. They are the *basic* beliefs which ground all others, our epistemological foundations. And to perform this role they need to have sufficient content to be used rather as premises in inferences. With the reduction in content required to keep them infallible, it seems unlikely that any interesting beliefs about the past, the future, the unobserved or even the present material surroundings could ever be justified by appeal to the basic. Our basic beliefs must have sufficient content to support the superstructure in which we are really interested, and no belief with that amount of content is going to be infallible?

Exploiting this structural tension, between certainty on the one hand and content on the other, the epistemic sceptic can now press his case against truth-directed transcendental arguments as follows: either the first premise will be sufficiently 'thin' to be certain, but then nothing non-psychological will be required to make it possible; or the first premise will be sufficiently 'thick' to require something non-psychological to make it possible, but then it will be too contentful to be certain. Thus, the epistemic sceptic can reiterate what was essentially Stroud's challenge: namely, to show how we can stop the weakening substitution, which will allow the sceptic to 'very plausibly' claim that all that is required to make thought or experience possible is something psychological or subjective, thereby falling short of the desired conclusion about how things are.

The force of this problem can be illustrated by considering a truth-directed transcendental argument from content externalism, as follows:

- (i) I have beliefs about water.
- (2) It is a necessary condition of having beliefs about water that there is water in my environment.
- Therefore
- (3) There is water.

³ Jonathan Dancy, *An Introduction to Contemporary Epistemology* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), 60. The same point is made by Nicholas Rescher, 'Foundationalism, Coherentism, and the Idea of Cognitive Systematization', *Journal of Philosophy*, 71 (1974): 695-708, pp. 702-3.

Now, the sceptic might accept that the first premise is certain, but he will then argue that I can only have this certainty, if thought-content can be individuated independently of the particular objects in the physical environment which the thought concerns, so that I could have mental states of this sort in a world without water. If, however, we try to block this weakening substitution in the second premise, and hence to justify our transcendental claim that the real existence of water *is* necessary by insisting that something more than a thinker's individualistic properties determines his thought-contents, then the sceptic can return to the first premise, and deny *its* indubitability, once this stronger requirement on thought-content is introduced. It seems, then, that the foundationalist truth-directed transcendental argument cannot stop Stroud's basic objection going through.

Thus, as predicted, it has turned out that the weakness of this response to epistemic scepticism arises from its use of a truth-directed transcendental argument, so that it would seem that this position is invulnerable to any sort of transcendental claim, if such scepticism can only be refuted by conclusively establishing the truth of what we believe. However, though it is perhaps natural to assume that the latter is the case, this assumption may be said to be over-hasty: it could be suggested that whilst a successful foundationalist argument would be sufficient to refute epistemic scepticism, it is not necessary, as even if we lack the means to prove *p* directly, it can still be shown that we have some other means of using a transcendental argument to establish the certainty of *p*. If this suggestion can be made to work, it therefore opens up the possibility that the epistemic sceptic can be answered *without* employing anything as strong as a truth-directed transcendental argument, and thus without inviting the standard objections, once the switch is made to a strategy that only requires transcendental arguments of a weaker, less problematic, form. This then raises the hope that weaker transcendental arguments can be used, but in a way that does not also involve a corresponding 'dilution' of the sceptical target; but for this hope to be substantiated it needs to be shown that the strategies that employ transcendental arguments in this weaker form really can provide a satisfactory response to the epistemic sceptic, without falling short. I will consider two such strategies in this light: the first can be called the *strong criteriological strategy*, the second the *framework strategy*.

3. 1.2 The strong criteriological strategy

Crucial to any criteriological transcendental argument strategy, as the name suggests, is the notion of a *criterion*-, and, ever since Wittgenstein gave this notion prominence, it has been widely felt to be of great anti-sceptical potential. At the same time, however, it has also been recognized to be complex and ambiguous, and at least three conceptions of a criterion and the criterial relation can be distinguished, in descending order of strength, as follows:

(1) *Entailment conception*: According to this conception, *A* is criterial evidence for *B* if *A* entails *B*, so that we can infer that *B* obtains if we know that *A* obtains.⁴

(2) *Good evidence conception*: According to this conception, *A* is criterial evidence for *B*, if it is necessarily true that, on most occasions on which *A* obtains, then *B* obtains, so that we can infer that *B* is the case, if we know that *A* has been the case on several occasions.⁵

(3) *Non-inductive justification conception*: According to this conception, *A* is criterial evidence for *B* if it is the case that, if *S* knows that *A* obtains, and has no reason for supposing that *B* does not obtain, *S* is thereby justified in believing that *B* obtains, *without S* needing to have had some prior experience of a correlation between *As* and *Bs*, and so without inductive support of this kind needing to have been available to *S*.⁶

⁴ Cf. Rogers Albritton, 'On Wittgenstein's Use of the Term "Criterion"', reprinted (with a postscript) in George Pitcher (ed.), *Wittgenstein: The Philosophical Investigations* (New York: Macmillan, 1966), 231-50, pp. 234-5: 'If I find in a particular case that the criterion for a thing's being so is satisfied, what entitles me to claim that I thereby know the thing to be so is that the satisfaction of the criterion entails that it is so, in the technical sense of the word "entails" in which if a man owns two suitcases, that entails that he owns some luggage.'

⁵ Cf. Sidney Shoemaker, *Self-Knowledge and Self-Identity*, 225: 'Since sincere perceptual and memory statements, unlike sincere pain statements, can be false, it seems legitimate to ask how it happens that such statements are generally true. It is *prima facie* plausible to suppose that such statements are usually true because they are made on the basis of the criteria of their truth.' Cf. also William Lycan, 'Noninductive Evidence: Recent Work on Wittgenstein's "Criteria"', *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 8 (1971), 109-25, p. 1 to: 'Thus, "*X* is a criterion for *Y*" means: It is *necessarily true* that *X* is evidence for *Y* (this does not mean, "*Y* necessarily accompanies *X* in every individual case"—that would make *X* into a defining characteristic of *T*); it is necessarily true that instances of *Y* accompany instances of *X* in *most* cases, or in all "normal" ones.'

⁶ Cf. Albritton, 'On Wittgenstein's Use of the Term "Criterion"', 246: 'That a man behaves in a certain manner, under certain circumstances, cannot entail that he has a toothache. But it can entail something else, which there is no short way of stating

Now, the general epistemic criteriological strategy is to show that *A* is a criterion for *B* in one of these senses, and from that to show the sceptic that we possess some knowledge in a way that is certain. Not all proponents of this strategy have used transcendental arguments to establish the criterial claim regarding *A*'s relation to *B*, appealing instead to intuition, analyticity, or paradigm case arguments; and I do not want to rule out such procedures here. The question for us, however, is *if* it is decided to use a transcendental argument to establish that *A* is a criterion for *B*, whether it can be done using a modest, non-truth-directed argument of some sort; and if it cannot, and if we are therefore obliged to use a truth-directed transcendental argument, whether we can hope to avoid the standard objections of the sort discussed in Chapter 2, which were shown to afflict the foundationalist transcendental argument strategy we have just considered. To anticipate: it will be argued that, though a modest (non-truth-directed) transcendental argument can be used to establish a criterial relation of the weakest sort (namely, the non-inductive justification conception), this conception of a criterion is too weak to be used against the epistemic sceptic. On the other hand, if a stronger conception of a criterion is adopted, then a truth-directed transcendental argument is required to establish that the criterial relation holds, in a way that leaves the strategy vulnerable as before. I will therefore conclude that the strong criteriological transcendental argument strategy is faced with a fatal dilemma. To see why, we must consider each conception of a criterion in turn, and examine (i) what sort of transcendental argument is needed to establish that (on this conception) *A* is a criterion for *B*, and (ii) whether, if this can be established, the conception is strong enough to be used in a satisfactory refutation of the epistemic sceptic.

On the first, *entailment* conception of a criterion, the answer to this second question is clearly positive: for if, *qua* criterion, *A* entails *B*, and if we can establish that it *is* a criterion of this sort, then we

exactly, so far as I can find. *Roughly*, then: it can entail that anyone who is aware that the man is behaving in this manner, under these circumstances, is *justified in saying* that the man has a toothache, in the absence of any special reason to say something more guarded (as, for example, that there is an overwhelming probability that the man has a toothache).⁷ Plantinga puts Albritton's characterization of a criterion here more formally as follows: '*p* is a criterion of *q* if and only if it is necessary that anyone who knows that *p* obtains, has no reason for supposing that *q* does not, and believes that *q* obtains *on the basis of* his belief that *p* does, is justified in believing that *q* obtains' (Alvin Plantinga, *God and Other Minds* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967), 220).

would be able to proceed against the sceptic by deducing *B* from *A* in a manner that would exclude any possibility of error. The obvious difficulty, of course, relates to the first question: how could we construct a transcendental claim that would show that this entailment relation between *A* and *B* holds, as a necessary condition for something else? We need not spend time exploring this difficulty, however: for in fact few criterion theorists have endorsed this conception of a criterion, seeing that it creates as many difficulties as it solves. For, whilst it might give us an immediate answer to the epistemic sceptic, its very strength makes it too powerful to be usable. Thus, while criterion theorists will characteristically want to claim that (for example) pain behaviour is a criterion for pain, they will accept that the former can occur without the latter, and that to deny this is to move towards an unacceptably strong form of behaviourism.⁷ Given that the entailment conception has little or no support amongst proponents of the criteriological position for this sort of reason,⁸ there is no need to consider any further how far transcendental arguments can go in establishing a criterial relation conceived of in this way.

Turning, then, to the *good evidence* conception, the suggestion here is that *A* is a criterion for *B* if it is necessarily true that, on most occasions on which *A* obtains, *B* obtains also. This is obviously weaker than the former conception, as it allows that *A* is inconclusive evidence for *B* in a particular case, i.e. that if *S* concludes that *B* obtains from the fact that *A* does, *S* could be wrong; what it denies,

⁷ Cf. Gordon Baker, 'Criteria: A New Foundation for Semantics', *Ratio*, 16 (1974), 156-89, pp. 161-2: 'C[riterial]-support may *always* be undermined by supporting evidence-statements embedded in a suitably enlarged context. This principle, that C-support is defeasible, is explicitly advanced in the particular case of psychological concepts. The possibilities of pretence prevent the reduction of third-person psychological statements to statements about behaviour, and these possibilities are built into our concepts of psychological states. Hence *any* behaviour allows of an interpretation as pretence given enough auxiliary hypotheses. Consequently, since third-person psychological statements are C-supported by statements about behaviour, the fact that this C-support may always crumble in an enlarged context seems to confirm the generalisation that *all* C-support is similarly defeasible.'

⁸ The contrary impression may come from the fact that criteriologists are inclined to make claims such as the following: 'the satisfaction of the criterion for *y* established *y* beyond question' (Norman Malcolm, 'Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*', reprinted in his *Knowledge and Certainty* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1963), 96-129, p. 113). However, it would be a mistake to assume that claims of this sort show the criteriologist is committed to the entailment view: for he may be operating with a weaker conception of what it means for something to be 'beyond question', for which conclusive (demonstrative) evidence is not required.

however, is that he could be wrong *all* or *most* of the time.⁹ Now, this weakening means that, in a particular case, the sceptic can rightly claim that we do not know that *B* obtains, even though we know that *A* does: for example, even if John is exhibiting pain behaviour now, I can't know with certainty that he is in pain. However, this weakened conception of a criterion is still not without anti-sceptical value: for, if I have seen a good deal of pain behaviour in general, or pain behaviour from John in particular, then I *can* infer (given the criterial claim) that *some* individuals have felt pain, or that John himself has felt it on some occasions (but not necessarily *this* one). Thus, if this criterial claim can be established, it would then see off the sceptic who questions whether we can be certain regarding the existence of other minds *at all*, for if pain behaviour is criterial for pain, it necessarily follows that if I have seen enough of the former, then there must be at least *some* other minds, for otherwise the criterial relation would be violated.¹⁰ This second conception of a criterion does therefore seem to be of genuine anti-sceptical force against the epistemic sceptic, in allowing us to deduce a conclusion from the criterial claim in a way that puts it beyond doubt, provided the criterial claim can be substantiated.

The question is, then, if we decide to substantiate this claim using a transcendental argument, what type of argument it needs to be, and whether it is likely to work. Now, given the nature of the claim, regarding how two states of affairs must necessarily go together in

⁹ Cf. Baker, 'Criteria', 180: 'A Constructivist [i.e. the type of criterion theorist Baker favours]... does not exclude the possibility that any particular instance of *C*-support may be subverted, for the *C*-relation is defeasible. What he does exclude . . . [is] that the defeasibility of the *C*-relation carries with it the possibility of a total general breakdown of *C*-relations. Consequently, he excludes only a global possibility, not the possibilities of collapse of particular instances of *C*-support.'

¹⁰ Cf. Akeel Bilgrami, 'Other Minds', in Jonathan Dancy and Ernest Sosa (eds.), *A Companion to Epistemology* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1992), 317-23, p. 322: '[Epistemological scepticism] is not correctly describable as insisting that any given knowledge claim could turn out to be false. It claims, much more dramatically, that it is always a conceptual possibility that all our claims in a certain region (the external world, other minds) should turn out to be false. This shows that all one has to do to oppose the sceptic is not to argue that particular claims to being knowledge should be guaranteed correct, but rather that there should be a way of preventing the slide from admitting that any given belief could be false to allowing that all beliefs in a certain region could be false. One may or may not be able to produce an argument that prevents this slide, but the point for now is that once the sceptic's position has been properly described, the modalities surrounding the concept of knowledge show that even if we conceive of criteria as defeasible we can still find some defence against the sceptic.'

most cases, it seems that the type of transcendental argument concerned needs to be truth-directed, by holding that this conjunction is a necessary condition for some feature of our experience, conceptual capacity, or whatever; but if so, can the standard difficulties for such arguments be avoided? There seems to be no particular reason to think so, even though we are now using a truth-directed transcendental argument against the sceptic indirectly, to substantiate a criterial claim, rather than directly, as in the foundationalist transcendental argument strategy considered above.

To see how the use of a truth-directed transcendental argument here creates familiar difficulties for the criteriological approach, consider the following argument offered by Shoemaker, to the effect that 'it is a necessary truth that [perceptual and memory] statements are generally true':¹¹

suppose we have discovered a new people whose language we do not as yet know, and that someone has proposed a way of translating this language that involves regarding a certain class of statements (or utterances) as perceptual statements and another class as memory statements. Suppose further that we find these statements to be most commonly uttered, confidently and assertively, in circumstances in which their proposed translation would be false. For example, the expression translated by the English sentence 'I see a tree' is commonly uttered, confidently and assertively, when the speaker's eyes are not open or not directed toward a tree, and the expression translated by the English sentence 'I ate meat last night' is frequently uttered by vegetarians but seldom by anyone who did eat meat on the previous evening. If this happened, surely there could be no reason for regarding the proposed way of translating their language as correct, and there would be every reason for regarding it as mistaken. Anything that might seem to show that the confident and sincere perceptual and memory statements that people make are generally false would in fact show that we are mistaken in regarding certain utterances as expressing certain perceptual and memory claims.¹²

Shoemaker here appears to be using a truth-directed transcendental argument to substantiate a criterial claim, from which an anti-sceptical conclusion can then be derived, as follows (focusing on the case of memory and scepticism about the past):

- (i) We make utterances, some of which can be interpreted by others as making memory statements: i.e. statements concerning past states of affairs.

¹¹ Shoemaker, *Self-Knowledge and Self-Identity*, 231.

¹² Ibid. 232-3.

(2) In order for our utterances to be interpretable in this way, most of the statements made in our utterances about the past must be true.

(3) If most of our utterances about the past must be true, then the world could not have come into existence 5 minutes ago.

Therefore

(4) The world has existed for more than 5 minutes.

It therefore appears that, by using a transcendental claim in (2) to substantiate the criterial claim in the antecedent of (3), we can deduce the past existence of the world in a sceptic-proof manner.

However, the difficulty with this argument is with (2): for it seems vulnerable to the Stroudian objection, that an equally plausible transcendental claim is (2'):

(2') In order for our utterances to be interpretable by others, most of the claims expressed in those utterances must appear true to them.

Now, of course, if we could add here the claim that those who can interpret our utterances are those with access to the truth (rather than the appearance of it), then the argument might go through; but as we only know we are interpretable by others like ourselves, and as they might be as much in error as us, we appear to have got no further forward. If so, it seems that (2') is too weak to support the criterial claim in the antecedent of (3), as it opens up the possibility that I could now make utterances about the past that are interpretable by others whilst still all being false, as long as they *appear* true to them; and so the rest of the argument fails to go through.

We may then turn, finally, to the third conception of a criterion, as a form of evidence that provides a *non-inductive justification* for the application of a concept, so that, on this conception, if *S* has some belief that pertains to a criterion of *B*, and from that infers that *B* is the case, *S*'s belief that *B* is the case is *ipso facto* justified, where there is then no requirement that *S* have the kind of evidence sufficient to support this belief on inductive or abductive grounds. Now, if asked *why* it is that *A* might constitute a non-inductive justification for *B* in this way (e.g. why it is that John's failure to speak his lines constitutes non-inductive justification for the belief that John has stage-fright), criterion theorists using this conception will characteristically claim that in order for a term to have meaning in the language in general or for *S* in particular, it must

be introduced into the language or introduced to *S* with rules about the conditions under which it can be applied;¹³ and as a result, if *S* finds that those conditions obtain, *S* is immediately entitled to assert that 'This is *B*' because this is what knowing how to use '*B*' as a concept involves. On the other hand, if the conditions obtaining are not paradigmatic for *B* in this way (e.g. John has run from the theatre), then to rightly assert 'This is *B*' on the basis of these conditions, *S* must have some inductive evidence to back the assertion up (e.g. on previous occasions when John has run from the theatre, it has been because he has had stage-fright). On this account, therefore, the claim that belief about *A* is sufficient to justify belief about *B* non-inductively, and thus the claim that *A* is a criterion for *B*, rests on showing that it is by relation to the former that '*B*' is introduced into the language, so that it is by reference to *A* that we learn to use the term.

Now, in claiming that (as Anthony Kenny puts it) 'a concept is vacuous unless there is something which counts as noninductive evidence for its application' in this way, the criterion theorist faces an obvious objection, namely (again in Kenny's words): 'why cannot there be concepts which apply to reality directly, and not on the basis of criteria? Do we not recognize the application of concepts in this way whenever we say things on the basis of observation rather than inference?'¹⁴ The difficulty this objection raises is this: if the sceptic can claim that *B*s are observable in some contexts (as a headache is for me when I have it), and that *S* could grasp the concept of *B* through his direct experience of *B*s in these contexts, then it would seem hard for the criteriologist to claim that *A* plays any special, privileged role in fixing the meaning of '*B*', where *A* is evidence for *B* in contexts where *B* is not directly observed (as a headache is for

¹³ Cf. Anthony Kenny, 'Criterion', in Paul Edwards (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 258-61, p. 259: 'X is not a criterion for Y if someone could learn the meaning of "Y" without having grasped the connection between X and Y.' Cf. also Norman Malcolm, 'Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*', 112: 'Perhaps the best way to elucidate [the notion of a criterion] is to bring out its connection with *teaching* and *learning* the use of words . . . Wittgenstein exhorts us, over and over, to bethink ourselves of how we learned to use this or that form of words and of how we should teach it to a child. The purpose of this is not to bring philosophy down to earth (which it does), but to bring into view those features of someone's circumstances and behaviour that *settle* the question of whether the words (e.g. "He is calculating in his head") rightly apply to him. These features constitute the "criterion" of calculating in one's head.'

¹⁴ Kenny, 'Criterion', 260.

me when you have it). Thus, even if it is admitted that (in Richard Rorty's words) 'it [is] trivially true to say that there must be criteria for the existence of unobservables... in order to get the language-game of talking about that unobservable off the ground',¹⁵ if *B* is *also* observable, the 'trivially true' claim cannot so easily be made, if it can be established that the language-game involving *B* could 'get off the ground' on this basis alone.

This difficulty then introduces a role for some sort of transcendental claim, to the effect that, although there are contexts in which *S* directly observes *B*, no such context can possibly enable *S* to grasp (or fully grasp) the concept of *B*, so that the acquisition of this concept can only come about in the non-observational context where the meaning of '*B*' is fixed by relation to *A*, thereby leaving the way open for the criteriologist to argue that the latter then constitutes criterial (non-inductive) evidence for the former. A transcendental claim of this sort is not truth-directed, however, as its aim is to establish under what conditions a term like '*B*' could be given meaning for a speaker, where what is said to matter is that *S* must learn to use *B* on the basis of evidence first, but where nothing is said regarding whether this evidence is always or mostly veridical. A transcendental argument of this type is *concept-directed*, where it is claimed that there is a type of context in which *S* needs to be able to use a concept (in relation to cases where *S* does not observe *B* directly and so learns to apply '*R*' on the basis of evidence), as a prior condition for being able to use it in another type of context (in relation to cases where *S* does observe *B* directly, and so can apply '*R*' without appeal to evidence). It therefore appears that, conceived of in this way, a modest (non-truth-directed) type of transcendental argument might be used as part of a criteriological strategy.

However, of course, the difficulty here is that whilst this weak conception of a criterion may allow us to use a non-truth-directed transcendental argument in this way, to establish that *A* provides a non-inductive justification for belief regarding *R*, this is not enough to answer the epistemic sceptic, as no criterial evidence of this sort conclusively establishes that *R* obtains: for, even if this argument can establish that *S* could not learn to use the concept of *R* without taking *A* to be evidence for *R*, and thus that *A* operates as a non-inductive justification for *R*, this does not exclude the possibility that

¹⁵ Richard Rorty, 'Criteria and Necessity', *Nous*, 7(1973), 313-29, p. 320.

in basing his beliefs concerning *B* on *A*, all *S*'s beliefs on this matter are mistaken.¹⁶ Thus, though the type of transcendental argument associated with this conception may be non-truth-directed, the conception itself would appear to be too weak to satisfy the demands of the epistemic sceptic. (This leaves open the possibility, of course, that we might be able to use this weaker notion of a criterion against some *other* form of scepticism, in a way that will then allow this more modest type of transcendental argument to be employed against the sceptic after all: such a possibility will be explored further below, in § 3.2.4, where the focus is switched from epistemic to normativist justificatory scepticism.)

We have therefore seen how the first attempt to use a modest form of transcendental argument against the epistemic sceptic falls short. We must now look at the second of these attempts, which adopts a different approach, though once again it brings in certain Wittgensteinian considerations.

3.1.3 The framework strategy

What I have labelled the framework transcendental argument strategy is more modest than the foundationalist strategy discussed in § 3.1.1, in that its focus is on using transcendental arguments to establish certain features of our conceptual scheme or categorial framework, rather than using these arguments on their own to establish

¹⁶ Cf. Rorty, 'Criteria and Necessity', 321-2: 'it is clear that non-correlationally established principles stating which observable phenomena are evidence for which unobservable phenomena need not be principles which state conditions under which the existence of the unobservable phenomena is, in Malcolm's phrase, "established beyond question". One can learn the meaning of a term referring to unobservable phenomena without having the ability to establish the existence of such phenomena "beyond question". Probable inferences are good enough. If the only point of the criterion-symptom distinction is either (a) to mark the difference between evidential principles by means of which we used to learn a term and evidential principles arrived at subsequently, or (b) principles established non-correlationally and principles established correlationally, then we need not say that the satisfaction of a criterion gives a different *kind* of assurance of the existence of the unobservable than the occurrence of a symptom.' On the question of whether Wittgenstein himself intended his notion of a criterion to have the refutation of epistemic scepticism as a consequence, cf. Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 45: 'This is enough for me to conclude that Wittgenstein's appeal to criteria, though it takes its importance from the problem of skepticism, is not, and is not meant to be, a refutation of skepticism. Not, at least, in the form we had thought a refutation must take. That is, it does not negate the concluding thesis of skepticism, that we do not know with certainty of the existence of the external world (or of other minds).'

any sceptic-proof conclusion about how things are in the world. By being intra-categorical in this way, transcendental arguments of this kind can afford to be more modest, and so can be of a belief-directed or concept-directed (rather than truth-directed) type. The aim of transcendental arguments deployed in this manner is to show that (as Anthony Grayling puts it) 'there are certain beliefs which are indispensable to coherent experience (*sive* coherent or intelligible discourse about the world, as will be argued), and it is therefore appropriate to characterize their fundamental role in experience as *transcendental* in precisely the Kantian sense'.¹⁷ Such beliefs might be said to form the framework within which experience, or language, or discourse, or thought is possible, making these beliefs indispensable for thought and talk, as necessary preconditions for the latter.

Now, in order to see why an anti-sceptical strategy based on this conception of indispensability introduces a role for transcendental arguments, it is enlightening to spell out this conception in a little more detail, in order to contrast it with others. In particular, it is because the conception of indispensability being used here has three features that it involves a need for transcendental arguments: namely, it is conceptual (not psychological); it is absolute (not methodological); and it is universal (and not relative). Let me characterize each contrast, to show how a conception of indispensability that lacked these features would not have a comparable role for transcendental arguments.

The contrast between *conceptual* and *psychological* indispensability is this: if *p* is a proposition no one can give up, this could be because no one is capable of giving it up for psychological reasons, to do with empirical constraints on how the mind works, how we come to have and form beliefs, and thus what natural necessities govern our modes of thought and judgement (psychological indispensability); on the other hand, if *p* is a proposition no one can give up, this may be because it is part of the 'logic' of having any beliefs at all that one believes *p*, which can be discovered by some sort of conceptual analysis of what it is to be a belief and thus can be known a priori (conceptual indispensability). It is clear that the latter form

¹⁷ Grayling, *The Refutation of Scepticism*, 4-5. Cf. also Stephan Körner, 'The Impossibility of Transcendental Deductions', *Monist*, 61 (1967), 317-31, pp. 318-19: 'A transcendental deduction can now be defined quite generally as a logically sound demonstration of the reasons why a particular categorial schema is not only in fact, but also necessarily employed, in differentiating a region of experience.'

of indispensability is required if transcendental arguments are to be introduced at all; for, as we have seen, such arguments characteristically make non-empirical claims regarding conceptual, non-natural necessities.

Secondly, the contrast between *absolute* and *methodological* indispensability is this: a proposition is *absolutely* indispensable if what makes it impossible to give up is that no contentful thought would be possible without believing it, whilst a proposition is *methodologically* indispensable if particular belief-forming practices rely on taking it for granted. Indispensability in the first sense is illustrated in Aristotle's claims about the Principle of Non-Contradiction as a necessary presupposition for anyone who wishes to say or think something meaningful,¹⁸ or in Wittgenstein's remark that 'about certain empirical propositions no doubt can exist if making judgements is to be possible at all. Or again: I am inclined to believe that not everything that has the form of an empirical proposition *is* one.'¹⁹ Wittgenstein also draws attention to indispensability in the second sense (which he may not have wanted to distinguish from the first), when he writes as follows:

345. If I ask someone 'what colour do you see at the moment?', in order, that is, to learn what colour is there at the moment, I cannot at the same time question whether the person I ask understands English, whether he wants to take me in, whether my own memory is not leaving me in the lurch as to the names of colours, and so on.

346. When I am trying to mate someone in chess, I cannot have doubts about the pieces perhaps changing places of themselves and my memory simultaneously playing tricks on me so that I don't notice.²⁰

It is generally when indispensability is used non-methodologically that it has been associated with the use of transcendental arguments, for then the claim is not that *p* must be presupposed as a quasi-pragmatic condition on the practice of inquiry, but as a constraint on belief or thought as such, in so far as these mental states are possible. Unlike methodological indispensability, therefore, these

¹⁸ Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* IV, ch. 4, esp. 1006b6-1006b13.

¹⁹ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, ed. G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright, trans. Denis Paul and G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1979), § 308 (P-39)-

²⁰ Ibid. 44; cf. also § 88 (p. 13) and § 337 (p. 43). For a discussion of this notion of methodological necessity, see Williams, *Unnatural Doubts*, 122-5.

constraints relate not to the way in which particular practices of questioning and investigation must take some things for granted, but to the conditions that make belief or thought possible. This makes their presuppositional status not merely contextual, but absolute: hence the felt need for a transcendental argument to support this kind of claim.

The third contrast is between *universal* and *relative* indispensability: that is, between a proposition that is indispensable for *all* believers, and one that is indispensable for some but not for others. Indispensability in the universal sense would seem to be the consequence of any account that conceives of it in non-psychological and non-methodological terms, as it would then imply that any belief-system as such would have to make this sort of proposition presuppositional: as part of the ‘metaphysics of belief, there would seem to be no need to relativize the indispensability of such propositions to any particular belief-system. Thus, once again, by establishing that a proposition is conceptually and absolutely indispensable, transcendental arguments are also supposed to be capable of establishing that they have this status universally, for all believers and not just for us or those sufficiently like us.

Of all the aspects of indispensability that figure here, the one that has provoked the most critical comment is the claim to universality. In several influential writings, Stephan Körner argued that the attempt to show that *p* must be believed because belief that *p* is a presupposition of any belief-system cannot get off the ground, as we can only argue this case on the basis of the belief-system we presently use, whilst we cannot establish that this is the only one there is or can be. Körner summarizes his objection as follows:

The person propounding a transcendental argument assumes that every and any thinker employs the same categorial framework as he does himself, and tries to show that, and why, the employment of this particular framework is ‘necessary’. The defect of all transcendental arguments is their failure to provide a uniqueness-proof, i.e. the demonstration that the categorial framework is universal. Kant and others seem to have been under the illusion that the exhibition of their own categorial framework already includes the proof of its own uniqueness.²¹

²¹ Stephan Körner, *Categorial Frameworks* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1974), 72. See also Körner, ‘The Impossibility of Transcendental Deductions’, and *Fundamental Questions of Philosophy* (Brighton: Harvester/Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1979). esp. chs. 12 and 13.

Responses to Kdrner have broadly taken two forms. Some have attempted to meet the argument in its own terms, and show that a uniqueness-proof for our belief-system *can* be given;²² others have tried to avoid taking up the challenge directly, by showing that considerations of indispensability can still be used against the sceptic, even when all that is shown is that *p* must be adopted by anyone who conceives of things within the belief-system we happen to have, whether or not this is the only one there is or could be.²³ Clearly the latter response is less demanding; whether it is dialectically adequate will be considered in what follows, when we examine what role the indispensability-claim plays in answering the sceptic.

We have therefore seen how transcendental arguments might be used intra-categorially, to argue that certain beliefs or concepts must form part of the framework of our conceptual scheme, and to that extent are indispensable to us. The attraction of this approach, given our previous discussion, is that transcendental arguments used in this way need not be truth-directed: that is, they need only set out to show that certain assumptions or doxastic commitments are required in order to have any beliefs, or experience, or thoughts etc. at all, but they are not required to establish that these framework beliefs are *true*.

Now, the question we need to consider is whether this form of modest transcendental argument can be used successfully against the epistemic sceptic, or whether it can only be used successfully against a sceptic of another type. As before, therefore, we need first to consider whether this approach really offers an adequate response to the

²² Cf. Grayling, *The Refutation of Scepticism*, 89-90.

²³ Cf. P. F. Strawson, *Analysis and Metaphysics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 26-7: 'We have then two conceptions of basic conceptual structures—two conceptions of which one is stronger, more demanding, than the other, since it requires its basic structural elements to be necessary or non-contingent. We need not cultivate either of these conceptions to the exclusion of the other. Questions arise about both. In particular the stronger conception is exposed to a kind of scepticism. By what kind of argument could it be shown that any concept or complex of concepts had the character of necessity envisaged in that conception? The question is obviously a serious one. But the interest and importance of the analytical enterprise are not seriously diminished if we cannot find a satisfactory answer to it. For there always remains the other conception, the less demanding one; and to arrive at a clear understanding of the most general features of our conceptual structure, as it exists in fact—whether or not it is possible to demonstrate the necessity of those features—is a sufficient task for any philosopher, however ambitious. If, then, one finds oneself forced to abandon the stronger conception of fundamental structure—and I do not say that one must or will—one can settle, without dismay, for the less strong.'

epistemic sceptic, for otherwise this modest use of transcendental arguments will still not have proved successful in this context. Assuming that we *can* show that *p* is indubitable using a belief-directed transcendental argument in this way (*pace* Körner), can this be sufficient to defeat the epistemic sceptic? I will consider three options, and argue that none is adequate (although, as before, it should be remembered that a negative result here still leaves open the possibility of a more positive outcome for belief-directed transcendental arguments *vis-à-vis* justificatory scepticism (cf. § 3.2.3, and Chapter 5)).

One option might be to claim that this approach is sufficient to satisfy the epistemic sceptic, once it is recognized that certainty does not require infallibility, but merely something weaker, such as indubitability. On the former conception, it is said that belief that *p* is certain, and thus constitutes knowledge, only if ‘*S* believes that *p*, but “*p*” is false’ is a contradiction; but, on the latter conception, it is said that belief that *p* is certain, and so constitutes knowledge, provided that that belief is not susceptible to doubt.²⁴ It could then be argued that the framework transcendental argument strategy is sufficient to establish indubitability and thus certainty in this sense: for if *p* is something any believer must accept in order to have any beliefs at all, then it would appear that *p* is indubitable with respect to this doxastic framework.

There are two difficulties with this approach, however. The first is that it raises Körner’s objection: namely, to show that *p* is indubitable *as such*, rather than just indubitable *for us*, some sort of uniqueness proof of our doxastic framework would seem to be required, with all the problems that raises. And, secondly, even if this difficulty can be met, it is not clear that this shift from infallibility to indubitability as a conception of certainty can be made to work: for, if indubitability is weaker than infallibility in so far as it leaves open the possibility that our belief that *p* is false, how can *p*

²⁴ Cf. William P. Alston, ‘Varieties of Privileged Access’, reprinted in his *Epistemic Justification* (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 1989), 249–85, p. 257: ‘We might think of indubitability as a weaker version of infallibility. To be infallible vis-à-vis one’s present conscious state is to be in such a position that no belief one has to the effect that one is in such a state can *be* mistaken. Whereas an indubitability thesis does not commit one to the impossibility of mistakes, but to the weaker claim that one could have no grounds for questioning the accuracy of one’s beliefs [about one’s present conscious states].’

be immune from doubt?; and *if* it is immune from doubt though possibly false, isn't this a vice rather than a virtue?²⁵

In response to this difficulty, it may be argued that, for the framework transcendental argument strategy to work, we need first of all to be committed to a more idealist outlook, according to which the sceptic is misguided in thinking that such a gap could arise between our conceptual framework and the world in this way, in so far as the latter is constituted by the former. This forms the core of the second option I will consider, and is taken by Grayling:

If the beliefs in question are necessarily presupposed to our conceptual scheme, and if our conceptual scheme is the only conceivable one, then the beliefs in question are more than justified; we are shown to be unable to do without them. And that is enough to defeat scepticism. Naturally, the sceptic will be tempted to complain that the question at issue is not whether we have to assume such beliefs, but whether they are *true*, in the sense that these beliefs are about objects that are '*really* real', *totally* independent of our experience. Here is the interesting result of [this type of transcendental argument]: it shows this kind of question to be misguided. There *is* nothing more to be said about the status of objects than follows from the fact that we have to assume the applicability of our concepts of objects. This is interesting because it forces a limit on the amount of ontological weight that can be borne by the items in the domain over which our thought and talk range, with a concomitant change in what kind of philosophical gloss on our pre-theoretical ontology we are to feel able to give. In schematic terms, ontological weight increases with existential independence; to say that objects are no more than what we must have concepts of for coherent experience, is to acknowledge that objects are not as ontologically heavy as we

²⁵ Cf. Dancy, *An Introduction to Contemporary Epistemology*, 64. Cf. also Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, § 222 (p. 29): 'I cannot possibly doubt that I was never in the stratosphere. Does that make me know it? Does that make it true?'; and Bruce Aune, *Knowledge of the External World* (London: Routledge, 1991), 138: 'Although it is true that the coherent use of common language requires us to assume things the skeptic is concerned to doubt and that we cannot ourselves simultaneously assume and doubt such things, the epistemological problems leading to a skeptical philosophy are not thereby resolved . . . The fact (if it is a fact) that we cannot consistently reject these propositions is one thing; our knowledge that they are true or probably true is quite another.' A comparable worry would seem to apply to Barry Stroud's recent attempts to use belief-directed transcendental arguments to show that because certain beliefs are indispensable (e.g. the belief that there is an external world) they are invulnerable, in so far as they cannot be exposed as illusory, even though (he admits) they might still be false: this, too, seems hardly to be something we should welcome, as it leaves the question of error open, while making the error undetectable even in principle. See Stroud, 'Kantian Argument, Conceptual Capacities, and Invulnerability', and 'The Goal of Transcendental Arguments'.

thought; we find ourselves having to espouse the slim maiden of idealism rather than the plump dame of realism.²⁶

Unfortunately, by committing himself to idealism in this way, Grayling makes his defence of this transcendental argument strategy turn out to be self-defeating, as any such dependence on idealism was precisely what we had hoped to avoid.²⁷

A third option is not to endorse idealism,²⁸ but to look for some characterization of certainty that is weaker than infallibility, but less problematic than indubitability. Under some interpretations, a suggestion along these lines is to be found in Wittgenstein, where he seems to suggest that certainty is a property beliefs have by virtue of their structural role (so to speak): namely, by being a belief that (as Peter Klein has put it) ‘can be appealed to in order to justify other beliefs but [which] stands in no need of justification itself’.²⁹

²⁶ Grayling, *The Refutation of Scepticism*, 91-2.

²⁷ For realist qualms that the idealist takes the framework strategy too far, cf. C. S. Peirce’s discussion of the fundamental principles of logic: while accepting that these constitute fundamental presuppositions of our practice, he denied that this makes them true. Peirce therefore preferred to talk in terms of a *hope*, rather than a belief, that these principles hold (see C. S. Peirce, *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, 8 vols., vols. i-vi, ed. C. Hartshorne and P. Weiss (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1931-5), vols. vii-viii, ed. A. Burks (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958), ii. 13, iii. 432, vii. 219 (where I have here employed the standard form of reference to Peirce’s work, according to which the first number gives the volume number, and the second the numbered paragraph).

²⁸ One parenthetical remark: it might be said, on behalf of the strategy just discussed, that I have handled it unfairly, by misplacing it in the context of epistemic scepticism, when in fact it is intended to answer the *justificatory* sceptic, notwithstanding the fact that talk of indubitability is usually associated with the former and not the latter. (Cf. Grayling, *The Refutation of Scepticism*, 138-40, where Grayling distinguishes between scepticism about knowledge and about justification along lines similar to mine, and claims he is only interested in the latter.) Ways in which this sort of intra-categorical argument might be used against the justificatory sceptic will be considered further in what follows.

²⁹ Peter D. Klein, ‘Certainty’, in Jonathan Dancy and Ernest Sosa (eds.), *A Companion to Epistemology* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1992), 61-4, p. 62. Cf. also Peter D. Klein, *Certainty: A Refutation of Scepticism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981), 117-22. I take it that Klein is here glossing remarks by Wittgenstein such as the following (*On Certainty*, p. 33):

‘250. My having two hands is, in normal circumstances, as certain as anything that I could produce in evidence for it.

That is why I am not in a position to take the sight of my hand as evidence for it.

251. Doesn’t this mean: I shall proceed according to this belief unconditionally, and not let anything confuse me?

252. But it isn’t just that *I* believe in this way that I have two hands, but that every reasonable person does.

253. At the foundation of well-founded belief lies belief that is not founded.’

Taking up this characterization of certainty, it might then be that a belief-directed transcendental argument could be used to show that particular beliefs must have this kind of ‘groundlessness’ (and hence certainty), as these beliefs must stand as self-evident or be presupposed, if any belief-system is to be possible at all: as believers, our cognitive framework must be such that beliefs exist within it that play this role, one which entitled us to call them certain (under this characterization of certainty).³⁰

The difficulty with this response, however, is that there is a large price to pay. For Wittgenstein argues that a belief can be true only if it can be supported by other beliefs, and therefore concludes that ‘if the true is what is grounded, then the ground is not *true*, nor yet false’;³¹ but by insisting that these certain beliefs form part of the framework within which truth and falsity apply and that therefore they cannot be true themselves, such beliefs thereby lose their epistemic status, as Wittgenstein himself admits when he talks of the oddity of claiming to know them: in his terms, they have a status more akin to rules or the presuppositions of a practice, which are required in order to make knowledge-claims *possible*, without *themselves* constituting such claims.³² The worry is then that, on this basis, the sceptic can argue that this is to admit that when we assert such framework judgements (for example, that the external world exists, or that the future will resemble the past), it cannot intelligibly be claimed that this is something we know—and this seems a conclusion

³⁰ For this sort of transcendental claim, cf. *On Certainty*, § 308 (p. 39): ‘about certain empirical propositions no doubt can exist if making judgments is to be possible at all’; or § 401 (p. 51): ‘I want to say: propositions of the form of empirical propositions, and not only propositions of logic, form the foundations of all operating with thoughts (with language)’; or § 449 (p. 58): ‘Something must be taught us as a foundation.’

³¹ Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, § 205 (p. 28); cf. also § 94 (p. 15).

³² Cf. *ibid.* 65-6: ‘498. The queer thing is that even though I find it quite correct for someone to say “Rubbish!” and so brush aside the attempt to confuse him with doubts at bedrock,—nevertheless, I hold it to be incorrect if he seeks to defend himself (using, e.g., the words “I know”).

499. I might also put it like this: the “law of induction” can no more be *grounded* than certain particular propositions concerning the material of experience.

500. But it would also strike me as nonsense to say “I know that the law of induction is true”.

Imagine such a statement made in a court of law! It would be more correct to say “I believe in the law of...” where “believe” has nothing to do with *surmising*.’ There is a useful discussion of this Wittgensteinian approach in Marie McGinn, *Sense and Certainty: A Dissolution of Scepticism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), and in Crispin Wright, ‘Facts and Certainty’, *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 71 (1985), 429-72.

the sceptic can cheerfully accept, in so far as his goal all along was to circumscribe the sort of propositions to which we can attach knowledge-claims in precisely this way.³³

Thus, it appears that, whilst the framework strategy does indeed employ transcendental arguments in a modest form, these fall short of establishing what is required to answer the epistemic sceptic. The possibility remains open, however, that such modest transcendental arguments will prove dialectically stronger when directed against a weaker form of scepticism, when some of the worries we have raised here will no longer be relevant; it is this possibility that will be explored further in what follows, beginning with a consideration of normativist justificatory scepticism.

3.2 TRANSCENDENTAL ARGUMENTS AND NORMATIVIST JUSTIFICATORY SCEPTICISM

Of all the forms of scepticism we have considered, normativist justificatory scepticism is the most ‘internal’ or conservative, in that it is not directed at our belief-forming methods as such, and so allows us to appeal to those methods and the norms that govern them, without demanding that we first ground those methods in some way (as the reliabilist justificatory sceptic does), or that we show that these beliefs meet a higher epistemic standard than justification (as the epistemic sceptic does). The ‘internal’ notion of justification we can therefore appeal to here has been characterized by Ernest Sosa as follows:

³³ Cf. Williams, *Unnatural Doubts*, 28: ‘The problems with this “Wittgensteinian” response to scepticism do not end here. The thought that we have a special non-epistemic relation to certain “framework judgments” suggests that these judgments, while genuinely factual, have a privileged place in the scheme of things, and we can now see why such a view will be hard to sustain. No matter what account we try to give of this privileged place, it will be difficult to deny the sceptic his triumph if we admit these judgments are ultimately groundless, while continuing to insist that they are genuinely factual. In consequence, anyone who goes down the path of claiming that we enjoy a special “non-epistemic” relation to our basic commonsense certainties will come under strong pressure to deny that these judgments are straightforwardly factual, which brings us back to the question of whether the envisaged reply to the sceptic offers more than verbal camouflage for a large concession.’ Cf. also p. 31. One Wittgensteinian who sees a clear tension here, and who thus allows that ‘it is a mistake to take [Wittgenstein] to be constructing transcendental arguments’, is P. M. S. Hacker: see his *Insight and Illusion*, revised edn. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 213–14.

(vi) Reflective justification, our best reflective intellectual procedure, is a matter of perspectival coherence—and necessarily so. Hence even a Cartesian demon could not give us an unjustified though appropriately coherent view of things—no matter how many others of our supposed faculties (besides coherence-seeking reason) turn out to be pseudo-faculties that lead us astray more often than not. Does it not seem conceivable, however, that even coherence-seeking reason could in some possible world more often lead us astray than aright? What shall we say of the beliefs of the rational in such a world? Rational beliefs would be *inapt* in such a world. But might they still be *justified*! If justification by definition derives from the ‘application’ (rational, logical, coherential) of our deepest logical and intellectual standards and procedures (which would need to be specified for more substance in our definition), then even in such a world rational subjects would by our lights be justified . . .

(vii) Justification is therefore by our view *internal*—and not even an evil demon could deprive us of it merely by tampering with our external context. For justification is *defined* as the correct ‘application’ (by our logic, naturally) of our deepest intellectual procedures (which makes justification relativist and indexical).³⁴

Given this conception of justification, as we noted earlier, the normativist sceptic cannot trade on the arguments used by epistemic and reliabilist scepticism; for all that matters here is that ‘our deepest logical and intellectual standards and procedures’ (i.e. our doxastic methods and their associated norms) can be appealed to in vindicating the beliefs we hold, as the standards and procedures themselves are not in question. For his position to work, therefore, the normativist sceptic must show that *by our own lights*, by reference to what we take to be legitimate doxastic practices, we are not entitled to the beliefs we have adopted.

Now, the structure of norms that governs our ‘deepest intellectual standards and procedures’ is no doubt complex and hard to interpret fully, but one broad distinction between doxastic norms is important here: namely, that between what I will call *inferential* and *non-inferential* norms.³⁵ By an *inferential* norm, I mean one that tells us that a belief is justified because that belief can be given some sort

³⁴ Ernest Sosa, ‘Beyond Scepticism, to the Best of Our Knowledge’, *Mind*, (<)-J (1988), 153–88, p. 183.

³⁵ My distinction here is analogous to, though more basic than, James Van Cleve’s distinction between generation epistemic principles and transmission epistemic principles: see James Van Cleve, ‘Foundationalism, Epistemic Principles, and the Cartesian Circle’, *Philosophical Review*, 88 (1979), 55–91, pp. 75–6.

of adequate inferential support from some other belief or beliefs the believer holds, where the norm specifies what the nature of that support needs to be for the belief to be warranted thereby (e.g. for a belief to receive deductive support from another belief, and thus to fall under this norm, it must be the case that the latter could not be true and the former false). By a *non-inferential* norm I mean one that tells us that a belief is justified because of some fact about the believer and his or her circumstances (for example, some state the believer is in or some experience the believer is having) or some fact about the belief itself as possessed by the believer. Thus, on this taxonomy, the deductive norm which says that '*p* is a justified belief for *S* if *S* justifiably believes *q*, and *q* entails *p*, and *S* justifiably believes that *q* entails *p*' is an inferential norm, as it treats justification as a matter of the right logical relations existing between the propositions believed; by contrast, the perceptual norm which says 'The belief that *x* is *F* is justified for *S* (*ceteris paribus*) if *S* has the impression that *x* is *F* (an *x* is Tish visual experience), and on this basis believes that *x* if *J*'³⁶ is a non-inferential norm, as it treats justification for *S*'s belief as arising from the fact that *S* is having a perceptual experience of a certain kind.

Given this distinction, the strategy of the normativist sceptic will characteristically be to try to show that, regarding some belief, it cannot be justified under any norm, either inferential or non-inferential, as it does not stand under the right inferential relations to any other belief we hold, and nor are we able to show that we meet some non-inferential condition sufficient to justify it. Thus, to take an example already mentioned: the normativist sceptic who questions our belief in the existence of other minds is not challenging us to show this existence is certain, or to show that the methods by which we have arrived at this belief are reliable; rather, he is challenging us to show that this belief meets our doxastic standards, in so far as (he claims) we do not have perceptual experience of other minds, and so the belief does not fall under this non-inferential perceptual norm, but neither is it properly inferable from any other belief, for example by analogical inference from beliefs about our own mentality, as (according to our *own* principles governing such inferences) inductive arguments of this sort need a wider evidential base. The

³⁶ I am here following Robert Audi in the statement of this norm, with some modifications. See Audi, 'Justification, Truth, and Reliability', 308.

issue then is whether a critique of this kind, applying to our beliefs in such things as the external world, other minds, the past, necessary causal relations, and so on, can indeed be met, and what role (if any) transcendental arguments can play in doing so.

As regards any particular problematic belief, there are clearly two ways in which this issue might be taken up: that is, the attempt might be made to show it conforms to an inferential norm, or a non-inferential one. Thus, in relation to the problem of other minds, some have tried to show (with respect to the former) that belief in other minds *can* be properly justified by analogical inference, or by some other inferential relation (such as an argument from simplicity or best explanation), whilst others have tried to show (with respect to the latter) that no appeal to further beliefs is needed and that experience is sufficiently contentful to make beliefs in other minds non-inferentially justifiable under a perceptual norm. We will now consider four transcendental argument strategies in this light, the first of which uses a transcendental claim itself to give the problematic belief inferential support; the second and third of which make transcendental claims to show (in different ways) how the belief can be justified by virtue of some non-inferential norm; and the fourth of which uses transcendental considerations as part of a broader attempt to show that the beliefs we can offer in support of those the sceptic questions are more powerful as reasons than the sceptic allows, and thus that they provide the latter with adequate justification in inferential terms. These strategies I will call (respectively): the *inferential strategy*, the *phenomenological strategy*, the *coherentist strategy*, and the *modest criteriological strategy*. Finally, in the last part of this section I will discuss a fifth strategy—which I will call the *naturalist strategy*—which attempts to rebut the justificatory sceptic, but without trying to establish that the belief or beliefs in question can be fitted under any norm.

3.2.1 The inferential strategy

As I envisage it, the proponent of this strategy accepts the sceptic's claim that some set of problematic beliefs (in the external world, other minds, and so on) cannot be justified under a non-inferential norm, for example by appealing directly to the nature of our experience, and then therefore sets out to show how they can be justified inferentially. In taking an inferential approach, one is not in any way obliged to argue transcendentially: for example, many would hope

to defend our belief in the existence of the external world by appeal to some sort of inference to the best explanation from our experiences, and then try to meet internal criticism from the sceptic who claims that the existence of the external world is *not* in fact the best explanation of this experience and so that belief in it is not justified in these terms. All that is therefore being proposed here is that transcendental arguments be used as another kind of inferential strategy of this sort.

The most obvious way of using a transcendental argument inferentially in this way is in a *deductive* manner, as showing how some problematic belief can be justified because it can be deduced from the fact that we have experience, language, or thought, via the transcendental claim that the former must be true to make the latter possible. Whilst such arguments would clearly be valid, they return us to the difficulties we faced when discussing epistemic scepticism and the foundationalist transcendental argument strategy in § 3.1.1: it seems that the sceptic will always be able to insist that the premises must be weakened, thereby falling short of giving us the hoped-for deductive justification.

However, this need not be the end of the inferential strategy in the present context, as the target now is not the epistemic sceptic, for whom *only* deductive arguments would do, but the justificatory sceptic, who will accept inductive arguments also. Thus what is required here is not certainty, but merely justified belief, where the latter clearly allows for the use of non-demonstrative as well as demonstrative inferential warrant, in so far as both sorts of inferences are taken to carry justification for us. This then might give us the chance to use a weakened truth-directed transcendental argument, which attempts to argue for *p* on the basis of a more modest transcendental claim, where *p* follows non-demonstratively from some undeniable premise.

A conception of transcendental arguments along these lines has been offered by T. E. Wilkerson, who suggests that 'when a sentence of the form "*A* is a necessary condition for *B*" occurs in a transcendental argument it means (i) that *A* is sufficient for *B* (*ceteris paribus*) and (ii) that we cannot conceive of any other conditions that would be sufficient for *B*'.³⁷ The effect of this is to clearly make the

³⁷ T. E. Wilkerson, *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 204. Cf. also his 'Transcendental Arguments', *Philosophical Quarterly*, 20 (1970), 200-12, and 'Transcendental Arguments Revisited', *Kant-Studien*, 66 (1975), 102-15.

transcendental argument non-deductive, as it is now logically possible for the premises to be true and the conclusion false. None the less, in relation to the justificatory sceptic this does not matter, because the transcendental claim would still give us good reason to believe that *A* is the case, even if that reasoning is now merely inductive; and by weakening the transcendental claim in this way we avoid many of the epistemological difficulties faced by the deductivist model. Thus, on this conception, a transcendental argument would be a special case of inference to the best explanation, where instead of arguing for *A* as the *best* of a range of explanations we can think of for *B*, we are arguing for it as the *only* one.

As Wilkerson himself observes, however, it is not clear that this conception of the transcendental argument will increase our chances of constructing one that will satisfy the justificatory sceptic, even though he demands much less from us than previously. For we are now required to show that what we take to be the case (the existence of the external world, other minds, etc.) is the *only* conceivable explanation for some given fact, which puts us under greater pressure than standard abductive arguments from some explanation as being the best, where the literature shows that even the latter is sufficiently hard to establish.³⁸ Indeed, it might be argued on this basis that the transcendental argument strategy is uncalled for and over-ambitious: for, if we can show that *A* is the best explanation for *B*, why should we even try for the much harder objective, of showing that it is the only one?³⁹

³⁸ Wilkerson, *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, 204. Cf. also Roderick Chisholm, 'What is a Transcendental Argument?', *Neue Hefte für Philosophie*, 14 (1978), 19-22, where Chisholm discusses an argument containing the transcendental principle: 'It is impossible to learn to use and understand a language containing terms which are not all definable unless some of these terms designate certain objects (which objects will then exemplify the sense of the terms)' (p. 20). After allowing that 'we cannot defeat the sceptic by means of a transcendental argument, [but] we may at least be able to use such arguments to justify certain propositions which the sceptic has held to be problematic', Chisholm still concludes negatively that: 'in almost every case, the second premise—what I have called the transcendental principle—is a proposition which is highly problematic. It is not a proposition which is known *a priori* to be true; it is at best a possible explanatory hypothesis . . . But how are we to prove that the confrontation with colored objects is essential [to learning colour-terms]? Might not the process also be brought about by certain types of illusory experience? Surely there is no *a priori* answer to such questions' (p. 22).

³⁹ Wilkerson raises another worry (*Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, 205-6), which I do not find so convincing: namely, that sufficiency claims must be a posteriori, because sufficiency is a causal notion. It seems to me that this is not obvious, however: for

3.2.2 The phenomenological strategy

Whilst the inferential transcendental argument strategy just outlined has met with familiar difficulties, this does not settle things in the sceptic's favour, as it was introduced with the assumption that no non-inferential norm could be used to justify these supposedly problematic beliefs in the external world, other minds, and so on. This assumption is itself challengeable, however, for these beliefs could be said to fall under experiential norms of some sort, with perceptual experience being the obvious source of justification. If this can be made out, then no inferential justification will be required: we can justify belief in *A*, by appeal to our experience as of *A*. This is therefore what can be called a phenomenological justificatory strategy.

Here, however, we meet a familiar and striking feature of the philosophical literature: namely, that whilst for some it is plausible to argue that these beliefs can be directly justified by appeal to perceptual experience, for others it is just as obvious that this cannot possibly be so, and if any justification can be given for them it must be inferential. This latter objection can be made in different ways and at different levels, however; we therefore need to consider it further to see in what form (if any) it leads to normativist justificatory scepticism, and thus what must be done to answer it here. We will consider three prominent challenges to the phenomenological justificatory strategy.

The first and most general challenge comes from a certain type of coherentist, who argues that the phenomenological justificatory strategy cannot succeed, as the very idea of a non-inferential perceptual norm is misconceived, in so far as justification for one belief can only come from the inferential support it receives from another belief, and cannot come from a non-doxastic state like perception. This point is sometimes put as an objection to foundationalism,⁴⁰ as follows:

- (1) Only what is itself epistemically justified can confer epistemic justification.

example, someone might claim that love is a sufficient condition for happiness on a priori grounds, through some sort of conceptual analysis of these notions: given what happiness is and what love is, it can be seen that the latter will be sufficient for the former. (I do not defend the plausibility of such an argument: I just don't see that it is any *less* plausible intrinsically than such an a priori argument regarding *necessary* conditions, of a sort which Wilkerson seems happy to allow.)

⁴⁰ Cf. Bonjour, *The Structure of Empirical Knowledge*, 58-84.

- (2) Only beliefs can be epistemically justified.

Therefore, from (2)

- (3) As a non-doxastic state, experience cannot be epistemically justified.

Therefore, from (1) and (3)

- (4) Experience cannot confer epistemic justification.

The crucial premise here is (2), which clearly cuts right through the notion of there being any experiential norms. In response to the coherentist, however, it can be said that (2) simply begs the question against his opponent, in so far as he assumes that all justification comes via transmission from one belief to another, while direct epistemic norms allow for the possibility of the generation of justification from a non-doxastic source.⁴¹ Moreover, as a matter of descriptive epistemology, it does appear that we operate with such norms; if the coherentist is claiming that we are *wrong* to do so, his point becomes revisionary. In relation to the scepticism we are considering here, this rules out the coherentist's argument: for the normativist sceptic is supposed to be operating in a way that is internal to our practices, without setting out to criticize them externally in this way.

A second challenge might appear to come from a certain type of indirect realist (whom we might call an *ontological indirect realist*), who holds that our perceptual experience is not direct, in the following sense. Suppose I am looking at a tree, and having an experience as of a tree in front of me: the ontological indirect realist will claim that I am only aware of the tree, because I am aware of some non-physical intermediary (usually called a 'sense-datum' or 'sense-impression') that makes this experience as of the tree possible. That experience is indirect in this way can be established (it is argued) by a familiar thought-experiment: if I have an experience as of a tree, exactly the same kind of experience could in principle occur without the tree actually being present, which suggests that my experience as of the tree is not brought about by the tree itself, but comes about via some intermediary; and it is this intermediary, rather than the tree, that I am said to perceive directly.⁴² The notion of indirectness here is thus analogous to the indirectness involved in a blind

⁴¹ Cf. Van Cleve, 'Foundationalism, Epistemic Principles, and the Cartesian Circle', 75-6. This point is also made by Grayling, *The Refutation of Scepticism*, 135-7.

⁴² Cf. Gregory McCulloch, 'The Very Idea of the Phenomenological', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 93 (1993), 39-57, p. 47: 'The dispute between indirect and direct realists turns on whether perception is mediated. Put like this, the matter is

man feeling the bumps in a pavement, where this is made possible by his awareness of the movement of the stick in his hand, the feeling of which acts as an intermediary between him and his awareness of the pavement.

Now, it may appear that if we concede the point to the indirect realist, then the only way belief in the existence of something worldly can be justified is via some sort of inductive inference, from the intermediaries to the worldly object as its most likely cause, thereby ruling out any non-inferential perceptual norm as a justification for our belief in such objects and making all such justification inferential. Thus, while ontological indirect realism does not rule out the very idea of a direct perceptual norm as such, it may seem to show that this norm is applicable only to our beliefs about our sensory states, and not to our beliefs about the external world, thereby blocking the phenomenological justificatory strategy. At this point, it may be felt that we are obliged to adopt some form of direct realism, and either deny the existence of such intermediary entities as sense-data or sense-impressions, and thereby reject the claim that we have prior awareness of such entities (what might be called ontological direct realism), or accept that such entities exist and may play some sort of purely causal role, but none the less deny that we have any awareness of them, so claiming that if we experience anything in looking at a tree, it is only the tree itself that we see (what might be called phenomenological direct realism).⁴³

However, while such a direct realist approach would immediately overturn the indirectness claim on which this challenge to the phenomenological justificatory strategy is based, direct realism is of course a substantive and contentious position, and it would be dialectically advantageous if our response to the sceptic here did not require a

easy: who wants to deny that perception is a causal transaction involving all sorts of components (e.g. light waves, retinal images) on the subject side of the perceived item? But direct realism is hardly the claim that in perception nothing caused by the perceived thing goes on between it and the perceiver. So the thing to do is ask whether any of the intermediaries are given to consciousness or awareness: the answer "no" delivers direct realism, the answer "yes" delivers indirect.'

⁴³ Cf. John McDowell, 'Criteria, Defeasibility and Knowledge', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 68 (1982), 455-99, p. 472: 'we are not to accept that in the non-deceptive cases ... the object of experience is a mere appearance, and hence something that falls short of the fact itself. On the contrary, we are to insist that the appearance that is presented to one in those cases is a matter of the fact itself being disclosed to the experiencer. So appearances are no longer conceived as in general intervening between the experiencing subject and the world.'

commitment to anything so controversial. Fortunately, it seems to me, such a commitment is not required, as it is possible to accept the basic indirectness claim, and still uphold the phenomenological justificatory strategy.

What makes this weaker response possible, I believe, is the fact that while indirect realism as initially characterized may be committed to the view that our experience as of physical objects in the world does not come about directly, it does not follow just from this that we are forced to justify our beliefs regarding such objects in inferential terms, *pro vided* that the indirect realist will still allow (as some do) that we still *end up* having an experience as of such objects, even if it is indirect, involving some experience of some intermediary.⁴⁴ So, even if it seeming to me that there is a tree in front of me is indirect and not direct in this sense, as long as (on this view) it is still experience as of a tree, my belief 'Here is a tree' can still be justified using a perceptual norm; the fact (if it is a fact) that this experience is indirect does not seem to matter for our purposes in this respect. Indeed, the analogy with the blind man and his stick should make this clear: we may admit that his awareness of the pavement is

⁴⁴ Cf. Moreland Perkins, *Sensing the World* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1983), 207: 'direct realism holds that *when* we become visually conscious of objects before our eyes we need not become conscious of something not before our eyes. Direct realism is a thesis about our visual awareness of things ... Indirect realism is also a thesis about visual awareness of objects: it holds that *when* we become visually conscious of objects before our eyes, we always become visually conscious of these things in part through becoming conscious of something that is not before our eyes . . . Both direct and indirect realism give accounts of the structure of that visual awareness of objects which is achieved in *attentively* looking at objects. They are accounts of consciously held, visual knowledge of objects. Indirect realism holds that when an object before our eyes holds our visual attention we are visually conscious of some feature of this object and that always this awareness of the object occurs in virtue of—and in part consists in—our (direct) awareness of something *not* before our eyes. Attention to a feature of something before the eyes is always mediated by attention to something not before the eyes. Direct realism holds that no such mediation is needed and that none regularly occurs.' Provided the indirect realist is happy to talk of visual awareness of the object (as Perkins is in this passage), we can still claim that beliefs regarding the object can be justified in terms of a direct perceptual norm, even if we allow that this visual awareness is mediated in some way. Cf. also E. J. Lowe, 'What Do We See Directly?', *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 23 (1986), 277-85, p. 283: 'What needs emphasising here is that indirectness of vision has, for me, no special epistemological implications: I don't suggest that knowledge about the indirect (or *more* indirect) objects of vision is *inferred* from knowledge about the direct (or *less* indirect) objects.' See also E. J. Lowe, 'Experience and its Objects', in Tim Crane (ed.), *The Contents of Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 79-104, pp. 89-90.

indirect, in so far as it comes about via his awareness of the movement of the stick in his hand; but (at least after some practice with his cane), he could be said just to be tactually aware that the pavement is bumpy, in so far as this is how it is thereby presented to him, and he would characteristically report the content of his experience in this way. Thus, even if the indirect realist is right, and I enjoy experience as of a tree because I have some sort of prior awareness of my perceptual states, provided he allows that I do indeed have the former, he cannot prevent me appealing to a perceptual norm to show that my belief regarding the tree is warranted.

Of course, this response has traditionally been treated as inadequate in relation to epistemic and reliabilist scepticism, because (in relation to the former) it leaves room for the suggestion that experience as of objects may occur without those objects being present, whilst (in relation to the latter) some sort of evidence that these intermediaries do not generally lead us into having misleading experiences of the world is required. In these sceptical contexts, I do not deny that a more ambitious response to the indirect realist's objection is called for, and that perhaps the supposed intermediary between experience and its objects would need to be ruled out. Here, however, we are working with the assumption that epistemic and reliabilist scepticism are not at issue for the normativist justificatory sceptic, so that for the latter (which is now our concern) the weaker response can perhaps suffice. Thus, as long as the indirect realist is prepared to allow that in the end experience can have physical objects as its intentional content, this is enough to show that our beliefs about such matters satisfy the perceptual norm; whether this experience comes about directly or indirectly is irrelevant to the concerns of the normativist sceptic, so that outright rejection of indirect realism of this sort is not so far required.

At this point, the sceptic would appear to have little room left for manoeuvre against the phenomenological justificatory strategy, so that there would appear to be no need to call on transcendental arguments in its support; for, if it is granted that our experiences can be legitimate grounds for belief without inference in this way, even though they are non-doxastic states and even though they may be mediated and so indirect in this sense, two important lines of criticism are immediately closed, without recourse to such arguments. There is, however, a third challenge to the phenomenological justificatory strategy which we must now consider.

This third challenge is also characteristic of indirect realism, but here takes a phenomenological form: that is, it bases its case for there needing to be inference to justify our belief in the external world, other minds, etc., not merely on the fact that our perceptual experience of these objects can be shown to be indirect rather than direct, but on the fact that our perceptual experience is not as of things of this sort at all; for the content of our experience is *confined* to what is experienced directly, and as this is limited to experience of sense-data or sense-impressions, so objects, other minds, etc. are said not to form the content of experience *at all*, either directly or indirectly. Experience is thus held to be too phenomenologically impoverished to allow us to base our problematic beliefs on it using a perceptual norm, by (as it were) simply reading the latter off the former; for on this conception of indirect realism material objects, other minds, etc. are (as Dancy puts it) 'invisible',⁴⁵ whereas on the previous conception they remained visible, though only as a result of some indirectness. Thus, the sceptic who takes up this challenge will argue that our perceptual experience is confined to a fairly simple level, for example to seeing colours and shapes, or hearing noises and sounds, or feeling textures, from which we are only licensed to form beliefs in accordance with the perceptual norm about colours, shapes, sounds, and textures; yet our actual beliefs about the world go way beyond such matters, as when we form beliefs about tables, people, past historical events, and atomic particles. If these latter types of belief are to be justified at all, therefore, the sceptic will argue that some sort of inference *must* be involved, with our more basic perceptual beliefs forming the evidential basis for such beliefs, rather than constituting such beliefs in their own right; the phenomenological justificatory strategy therefore falls short of what is required (on this view), because even *given* our right to use experience as a ground for belief, the latter is too impoverished to allow us to treat belief in the existence of the external world, or other minds, etc. as experiential, and hence as justifiable without inference.⁴⁶ (So, in terms of our analogy:

⁴⁵ Dancy, *Introduction to Contemporary Epistemology*, 168. Dancy contrasts this position with the sort of 'double awareness' that seems to characterize the form of indirect realism we have discussed previously, where an indirect experience (of things in the world) is based on a direct experience (of sense data).

⁴⁶ Cf. Michael Ayers, *Locke*, 2 vols. (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), i. 180: 'Lockean "sensitive knowledge" is pre-theoretical and immediate, but extends less far even than the primitive awareness of objects which we need to ascribe to a baby. It does not include knowledge that the world is really and actually spatial. That

the indirect realist is now claiming that, as a matter of phenomenology, the blind man does not have the experience as of a bumpy pavement; he just feels the stick move in his hand, and from that *infers* that the pavement is bumpy. The sceptical question is then, if this is *all* he has to go on, whether the blind man could ever be in a position to justify his belief that the pavement is bumpy—or indeed that the pavement exists at all.)

Now, it is at precisely this juncture that an appeal can usefully be made to a transcendental claim, of an experience-directed sort, as a way of blocking this sceptical attempt to remove the phenomenological justificatory strategy of its force. This attempt, as we have seen, rests on certain claims about the content of our experience, as falling short of what is needed to directly warrant our problematic beliefs; the role of the transcendental argument, therefore, would be to refute these claims, by showing that unless our experience were in fact of the required sort (as of material objects, other people, and

“a piece of Mana of sensible Bulk” and in motion can produce in us an idea of motion which “represents it, as it really is in the Mana moving” may be something “every Body is ready to agree to”, but on Locke’s official account is not something evident to the senses or arrived at without speculative thought. He did accept the metaphysical principle that whatever exists and acts is particular and therefore has position in objective space and time, but even that goes beyond the deliverances of the senses.’ Cf. also Hilary Putnam, ‘Sense, Nonsense, and the Senses: An Inquiry into the Powers of the Human Mind’, *Journal of Philosophy*, 91 (1994), 445–517, p. 473: ‘Originally, doctrines of sensory ideas or sense data were put forward as philosophically sophisticated descriptions of the phenomenology of ordinary perceptual experience.’ To the objection that the phenomenological indirect realist misdescribes the content of our experience, the indirect realist will often reply with the claim that habituation has led to confusion on this matter, by leading us to take the result of judgement and inference as the content of perceptual awareness itself. Cf. Johann Gehler, *Physikalisches Wörterbuch*, 6 vols. (Leipzig, 1787–96), iv. 13–14 (cited and translated by Gary Hatfield in his *The Natural and the Normative: Theories of Spatial Perception from Kant to Helmholtz* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990), 39–40): ‘Through such exercise there is finally acquired the ability to judge, quickly and correctly, those things which daily have come before the eyes and have often been compared with touch. Eventually this ability becomes routine, and interweaves itself so completely with vision itself, that ultimately we no longer see without spontaneously making a rapid judgment about the distance, size, and other qualities of the visible object. This judgment becomes so habitual that the common man confuses it for vision itself, and it requires serious thought in order once again to abstract and distinguish the pure optical presentation (which agrees with the image in the eye) from the judgment of the soul about the visible object.’ The same approach is adopted by Descartes, in defence of his claim that knowledge of ‘size, shape and distance’ is the product of ‘reasoning’ and ‘depends solely on the intellect’: see his *Objection and Replies* in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, 2 vols., trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), ii. 63–398, p. 295–

so on), then we could have no experience at all, or (more weakly) no experience of a sort that the sceptic grants we do have (for example, introspective experience of our own mental states). In this way, the sceptical attempt to stop us appealing to experience as sufficient justification for our problematic beliefs can hereby be blocked, using a modest form of transcendental argument.

Here, then, we have come to a point where a case can be made for using transcendental arguments against scepticism, without inviting the standard objection which asks how such arguments can be used to bridge the gap between how things are and how they appear to us, without becoming implausible. This objection can be avoided here, because all the transcendental argument is required to do is establish how things appear to us; it is then thanks to our experiential (non-inferential) norms that we are justified in moving from that to beliefs about how things are. If the sceptic wishes to quarrel with this move, his quarrel is now not with the transcendental argument, but with our doxastic methods themselves, which makes him a different sort of sceptic altogether.

It therefore appears that, in general terms, what we have called the phenomenological transcendental argument strategy offers what we need: namely, a sceptical target against which a weaker type of transcendental argument can none the less prove effective. Clearly, however, much more detail will need to be added to this general picture to make it convincing and to show what transcendental arguments might actually be used: this will be the task of Chapter 4. For now, however, I wish to motivate and explore the third of the strategies that can be deployed against the normativist sceptic.

3.2.3 The coherentist strategy

In the previous section, an outline case was made for the cogency of a transcendental argument strategy that uses these arguments to show that the intentional content of our experience is much richer than the normativist sceptic characteristically allows, and thus that, where this is so, non-inferential experiential norms which appeal to facts about our experience can be used to justify our beliefs, rather than the inferential norms which the sceptic has (arguably) shown to be disallowed here. As I have said, the detailed development of this phenomenological transcendental argument strategy will be explored in a subsequent chapter, and its use illustrated by reference

to the sceptical problem of the external world (see Chapter 4). However, even if the general cogency of this strategy is granted, it could still be objected that such a strategy can only achieve fairly limited goals, by its very nature: for, even if it can be shown that the sceptic can be forced to admit, using a transcendental argument, that our experience must be much richer than he initially allows, it is still the case that many of the beliefs he questions will fail to be justifiable experientially, just because of the nature of those beliefs. To take an obvious case of this sort that might be brought up: suppose the external world sceptic chooses to challenge our right to believe that objects continue to exist unperceived; then how, even given the richest conceivable conception of experience, could this belief be justified in experiential terms, in that it is by its very nature a belief that claims to go *beyond* experience? It seems that, to justify beliefs of this sort, we must either return to an inferential approach (for example, appeal to inference to the best explanation), or find some non-inferential norm which is at the same time not itself phenomenological.⁴⁷

Now, although it is not always seen as such, it is arguable that a certain sort of coherentism offers us such a norm, which is non-inferential in so far as it takes some fact about the believer to constitute justification for his belief. In the perceptual case, that fact relates to the believer's experience, but in the coherentist case, that fact is whether the belief in question makes the believer's belief-set more or less coherent, in accordance with the following norm: if S's belief-set is more coherent with the belief that *p* as a member than without it or with any alternative, then *p* is a justified belief for S'.⁴⁸ Thus the coherentist is operating with a norm which is non-inferential in my sense, because it appeals to certain facts about the place of the belief in the believer's doxastic economy, rather than to the logical relations that hold between beliefs, so that *p* is justified for S' if, were he to give it up, his belief-set would be less coherent (meaning: cohesive, consistent, and comprehensive). Put another way: it is the effect of believing *p* on the structure of one's

⁴⁷ In using this example, I only mean to illustrate in a general way how the phenomenological strategy might be said to be limited: it is of course the case that some have argued that our experience *is* phenomenologically rich enough to support a belief in the continued existence of objects unperceived (e.g. when it appears to us that one object stands behind another in three-dimensional space).

⁴⁸ For a characterization of the coherentist norm along these lines, cf. Dancy, *Introduction to Contemporary Epistemology*, 116.

belief-system that constitutes its warrant, rather than the way in which the other beliefs held give it some sort of inferential support.⁴⁹

Now, if coherentist grounds are brought into play in this way, as a means of justifying some of our beliefs, it can arguably extend further than the phenomenological approach, for here we are not limited to what content experience can be shown to have. Moreover, it leaves open an obvious role for transcendental arguments of a *belief-directed* kind, here used to demonstrate that it is only possible for us to have some belief in so far as we have others, thereby showing how the latter are justified on a coherentist basis. Here, then, we have arrived at a second way in which modest transcendental arguments can be used against a sceptical target. This approach will be illustrated and further developed in Chapter 5.

Before proceeding, however, it is important to recognize that the coherentist approach being proposed here is distinctive in certain ways. First, it is first-level and not meta-level: that is, coherence is treated as a justification for particular beliefs rather than a justification for other belief-forming practices (such as induction), which are here taken to be legitimate in their own right. The reason for this is that the normativist sceptic targets particular beliefs rather than our belief-forming methods as such, so the question of justifying these practices does not arise. Secondly, and as a result, coherentism as conceived here can afford to be a pluralist position, in allowing that beliefs might be legitimate by virtue of being based on a warrant other than coherence, such as those relating to perceptual experience, testimony, memory, and so on (just as in ethics the deontologist need not hold that all right acts are right for the same reason).

⁴⁹ This point about coherentism is also made by Alvin Plantinga, *Warrant: The Current Debate* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 78-9: '[For the coherentist] if a proposition *B* coheres with my noetic structure, then *B* is warranted for me; its warrant does not arise, however, by virtue of my believing it *on the basis of* the rest of my noetic structure, so that those propositions are my *evidence*—deductive, inductive, or abductive—for *B* ... A *pure* coherentist resolutely rejects warrant transmission altogether; for her, all propositions that enjoy warrant in a noetic structure are basic in that structure. Deduction, induction, and abduction may indeed figure, in one way or another, as elements in the coherence relation, but warrant does not get transmitted by the basis relation from one proposition to another.' Another, related, doxastic norm that would also appear to be non-inferential in this way is the principle of epistemic conservatism, for which the fact that *S* believes *p* can constitute its justification: here, clearly, the norm does not call on the belief's inferential relations to any other beliefs as a source of justification, but on a fact about *S*, namely the fact that *p* is something *S* believes. The relation between coherentism and conservatism as norms will be discussed further below: see § 5.4.4.

Thirdly, in so far as the coherentist principle is here employed in the context of normativist scepticism, it is taken for granted that its justificatory force can be legitimately established without answering the circularity objection raised by the reliabilist sceptic, and so without needing any meta-justificatory argument establishing that beliefs formed in accordance with this principle are more likely to be true than not; attempts by reliabilist coherentists like Bonjour and Davidson to demonstrate the latter are therefore not called for in this context.⁵⁰ Fourthly, and finally, the position here can and will allow for a degree of relativity, not in relation to coherence as a warrant, but in relation to the beliefs that can be justified thereby: for clearly, given different belief-systems, different beliefs may be legitimated on coherentist grounds, as making these systems more coherent than they would otherwise be. It is hard to see anything objectionable in this, however, any more than different perceptual experiences can legitimate different beliefs in different subjects. It remains to be considered whether other sorts of relativity create any further difficulties.

3.2.4 *The modest criteriological strategy*

In the previous two subsections, we have considered two responses to the normativist sceptic's claim that we cannot justify a belief because (according to the sceptic) the only justification we can give for it falls short of adequacy, where both responses attempt to show that certain facts about us (that we have experience of a certain kind) or about the belief itself (that it contributes essentially to our framework of beliefs) are enough to give the belief a non-inferential justification. Thus, on these responses, the strategy is to show that we have adequate grounds for appeal to some non-inferential doxastic principle to justify the belief, to do with the nature of our experience and/or belief-system, whilst admitting that no logical relation between this belief and some other(s) constitutes its justificatory basis. This sort of response is attractive, because invariably the main

⁵⁰ Cf. Bonjour, *The Structure of Empirical Knowledge*, 158: 'a satisfactory meta-justification of our envisaged coherentist theory of empirical justification must involve showing in some way that achieving coherence in one's system of beliefs is also at least likely to yield correspondence'. For Davidson's argument that 'coherence yields correspondence', see his 'A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge', in Ernest LePore (ed.), *Truth and Interpretation: Perspectives on the Philosophy of Donald Davidson* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 307-19.

thrust of the normativist sceptic's position is to show that there is no belief or set of beliefs which can be used to provide inferential support for the problematic belief or beliefs in question; by appealing to a non-inferential norm rather than an inferential one, therefore, we can avoid this criticism.

However, it might not always be possible or convincing to give a justification for a problematic belief that is non-inferential in this manner, and in these cases the sceptical challenge must be faced up to by showing the sceptic that adequate grounds *do* exist for inferring that *B* obtains from *A*, where this is what the sceptic questions. We have already discussed one such approach (in § 3.2.1), which uses a transcendental claim to provide a way of showing that this inference can be justified on abductive grounds; we concluded, however, that this approach left the transcendental claim either too strong (for *B* is rarely the *only* explanation that we can give for *A*) or redundant (because if it is *not* the only one, then we are back to a standard inference to the best explanation). However, I now wish to suggest that a transcendental argument might be employed more indirectly, not by using a transcendental claim itself to show that *B* can be justified by inference from *A*, but to show that the inferential relation between *A* and *B* is different from the one envisaged and criticized by the sceptic, and with it what we are required to do to justify the one belief by appeal to the other. A transcendental claim is used in this way as part of what I call a *modest criteriological strategy*.

The aim of this strategy is to refute the normativist justificatory sceptic, who claims that the belief that *B* obtains cannot be inferentially justified for *S*, because *S* lacks sufficient grounds to make any inference to *B* from any other belief or beliefs: for example, nothing else *S* believes entails that *B* is the case, and nothing else he believes provides any inductive or abductive reason to believe *B* is the case, for *S* has no reason to believe the corresponding major premises (that if *A* obtains, *B* is usually true; or, that *B* is the best explanation for the fact that *A* obtains). Now, the claim of the criteriological approach is that if, in believing that *A* obtains, *S* has a belief that pertains to some *criterion* of *B*, and infers that *B* is the case from *A*, this is sufficient *in itself* to make *S*'s belief that *B* is the case justified. The fact that the belief has been inferred on the basis of a belief that concerns something that is a criterion for *B* means that no inductive or abductive support for this inference is required in order for the belief that *B* to be justified.

Now, we have already seen (in § 3.1.2) that there is a role for transcendental arguments in the criteriological approach; but there, where the aim was to refute the epistemic sceptic, a stronger conception of a criterion had to be used, for which a truth-directed transcendental argument was then required. Here, however, the target is the normativist justificatory sceptic, who does not require conclusive evidence for *B*, but only to be shown that we have justification for believing that *B* obtains, when (he argues) we cannot provide suitable evidence for *B* in inductive or abductive terms; the weak conception of a criterion can then be used to claim that *A* provides us with a non-inductive justification for *B*, so that his objection loses its point, as it follows that no such inductive or abductive grounds are then required. A non-truth-directed transcendental argument may then be needed, however, to meet the objection that *B* is directly observable, so that no evidence need be criterial in this way: the aim of this argument will be to show that one kind of context in which *S* must learn to use the concept of *B* is where *B* is *not* directly observed, so that some evidence for *B* must form a part of the meaning-forming criteria for the latter, and thus constitute a source of non-inductive justification for beliefs concerning *B*.^{ix} Here, then, we have scope for adopting a transcendental argument that is non-truth-directed, in so far as we can answer the sceptic using this weaker conception of a criterion, as our target now is correspondingly less demanding. It is this approach to the sceptical problem of other minds that will be considered in Chapter 6.

3.2.5 *The naturalist strategy*

We have therefore seen three ways in which modest transcendental arguments might be used against the normativist justificatory sceptic, to show that a belief can be justified in accordance with certain kinds of warrant (perceptual, coherentist, and criteriological respectively), so that our problematic belief (in the external world, other minds, etc.) can thereby be legitimated. I have argued that this approach gives due respect to Stroud's criticism of more ambitious (truth-directed) transcendental arguments, whilst still showing how transcendental arguments of a less ambitious kind can be given an

⁵¹ For my earlier discussion of this difficulty and the role of a concept-directed transcendental argument in answering it, see above, § 3.1.2.

anti-sceptical role, when the nature of this sceptical target is suitably understood.

Now, in the recent literature others have also tried to find a place for modest transcendental arguments, but not in the way I have recommended here. It has been suggested that we can answer the justificatory sceptic more directly, by simply using the sort of indispensability claim characteristic of belief-directed framework transcendental arguments (namely, those that show that some belief or set of beliefs is foundational to our conceptual scheme), but without using such claims in conjunction with any appeal to norms. Thus, whereas I conjoined my use of a belief-directed transcendental argument to an appeal to coherence as a kind of warrant, and so attempted to answer the question of justification in these terms, the approach we are now considering aims to dispense with this step, in a way that may seem to give it the advantage; we therefore need to see whether it really does.

One recent and prominent proponent of a more straightforward approach of this kind is Strawson, who has modified his earlier position in response to the sort of difficulties raised by Stroud. As I do here, Strawson accepts that transcendental arguments should be used not to make truth-claims as such, but as a way of ‘investigating the connections between the major structural elements of our conceptual scheme’, in order to show that ‘one type of exercise of conceptual capacity is a necessary condition of another’.⁵² However, Strawson makes no use of the kind of coherentist norm I have conjoined to this conception of transcendental argument, as showing that our world-view relies on certain presuppositions we make about how things are. Instead, he adopts an approach which he labels ‘naturalistic’, in honour of Hume and the inspiration provided by passages such as the following:

Thus the sceptic still continues to reason and believe, even tho’ he asserts, that he cannot defend his reason by reason; and by the same rule he must assent to the principle concerning the existence of body, tho’ he cannot pretend to any arguments of philosophy to maintain its veracity. Nature has not left this to his choice, and has doubtless esteem’d it an affair of too great importance to be trusted to our uncertain reasonings and speculations.

⁵² Strawson, *Skepticism and Naturalism*, 22.

We may well ask, *What causes induce us to believe in the existence of body?* but 'tis vain to ask, *Whether there be body or not?* That is a point, which we must take for granted in all our reasonings."

Taking the last sentence as a kind of transcendental claim regarding the central role that the belief in external objects (for example) plays in our belief-system, Strawson argues that Hume showed we could take its consequent immunity to doubt as sufficient *in itself* to settle any sceptical questions concerning justification that might arise, and so does not make play with any of the coherentist considerations I have introduced.^{53 54}

This Humean, naturalistic reply to the sceptic is not without its ambiguities, however. On one understanding of Strawson's position, it could be taken purely *pragmatically*, as showing that the question of justification can have no real practical implications, in actually getting us to give up our belief, and thus that we can set it aside as being 'idle'.⁵⁵ This sort of response can perhaps be found in Wittgenstein too,⁵⁶ and is an aspect of Strawson's position that is emphasized by Grayling:

In short, then, sceptical doubt is shown to be idle or pointless because the beliefs the sceptic asks us to justify turn out to be necessary to our thought and talk of the world, and nothing counts as thought and talk unless it is recognisable as such from the standpoint of thought and talk we enjoy; so that beliefs to which we are committed, and to which essential reference must be made for any explanation or description of experience in general, are simply not negotiable, that is, are not open to doubt. One might extend the

⁵³ David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, 2nd edn., rev. P. H. Niddich (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), book I, part IV, § 2, p. 187.

⁵⁴ Cf. Strawson, *Skepticism and Naturalism*, 1-29. This approach is also adopted by Grayling, *The Refutation of Scepticism*. For further critical discussion of the naturalistic response to scepticism as conceived by Strawson, see Williams, *Unnatural Doubts*, 10-17; Sosa, 'Beyond Scepticism, to the Best of Our Knowledge', 160-3; Ernest Sosa, 'P. F. Strawson's Epistemological Naturalism', in Lewis Edwin Hahn (ed.), *The Philosophy of P. F. Strawson* (Chicago and La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1998), 361-9; J. J. Valberg, *The Puzzle of Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 168-96; and Pranab Kumar Sen, 'On a Gentle Naturalist's Response to Skepticism', in Pranab Kumar Sen and Roop Rekha Verma (eds.), *The Philosophy of P. F. Strawson* (New Delhi: Indian Council of Philosophical Research, 1995), 266-304.

⁵⁵ Cf. Strawson, *Skepticism and Naturalism*, 19-20.

⁵⁶ Wittgenstein talks of the idleness of scepticism in *On Certainty*, § 117 (p. 18), though here he seems to mean its lack of practical consequences and connections, rather than its futility.

legal metaphor suggested by Kant's 'deduction' and say that the terminus of the argument is the *defeasance* of scepticism; one renders the sceptical doubt null and void by a demonstration of the fact that we are bound to hold the beliefs the sceptic asks us to justify.⁵⁷

Taken in just this pragmatic way, therefore, the naturalistic response uses transcendental arguments to show that the centrality of some beliefs makes any normative questions futile, and thus there is no need for us to engage with them at all.

There are two main worries about this approach, however. The first concerns what role can really be given to transcendental arguments here. For, it might be said, we hardly need an *argument* to show that sceptical doubt will never get us to reconfigure our beliefs, as this can be felt immediately and is part of the 'experience' of scepticism that makes it troubling in the first place: given that I know I'm not going to give this belief up, what can I say to the sceptic to show that I am right not to do so? A second worry concerns the deeply un-Kantian nature of this approach: for while Hume may indeed have thought that sceptical issues could and should be ignored, within the context of his descriptive investigation of how it is that we form the beliefs we do, Kant makes clear that by raising such issues, the sceptic can help us avoid dogmatism and illegitimate belief, suggesting that (unlike Hume) he wanted to maintain the importance of normative questions.⁵⁸

However, it might be said that Strawson's naturalism is not intended to side-step normative issues in this way, but to address them, albeit indirectly. Thus, one suggestion that is perhaps implicit in what is said regarding Hume's appeal to Nature as an 'absolute and uncontrollable necessity'⁵⁹ is that naturalism provides a response to the sceptic, by showing not just that his justificatory questions are pointless, but that they fail to bite, because we cannot be criticized in this way for what we cannot control or change. Here the claim would be that what transcendental arguments show is that we are immune from the kind of considerations of irresponsibility, irrationality, or dogmatism the sceptic raises, because they are shown

⁵⁷ Grayling, *The Refutation of Scepticism*, 92-3.

⁵⁸ Cf. Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, A769/B797.

⁵⁹ Hume, *Treatise*, book I, part IV, § 1, p. 183; cf. Strawson, *Skepticism and Naturalism*, 10-n.

to violate the principle that 'ought implies can'. In this way, it could be argued that because these beliefs are ones we cannot give up due to their centrality in our belief-system, the sceptic cannot possibly criticize us for believing them, thus making his stance wholly inappropriate. This response can be represented as more deeply Humean in outlook than the purely pragmatic version just discussed, in its insistence that the sceptic raises normative issues where they are inapplicable, taking too much of what we think and do to be within our control, when in fact we are constrained in the options that are available to us.

It is not clear, however, that this kind of involuntarist naturalism is any more satisfactory than the purely pragmatic kind. A central difficulty is how far this approach really succeeds in undercutting the normative issue. Certainly at one level it does: for, if it can be shown that the structure of our belief-system makes certain propositions impossible for us to doubt, then we cannot coherently be criticized or blamed for believing them; to this extent, the principle of 'ought implies can' can do some work. However, this in itself does not block the sceptic from asking a deeper question: namely, if we *could* (*per impossibile*) feel some doubt regarding this proposition, would we thereby be being more rational in doing so? The general difficulty is this: although the principle of 'ought implies can' means that people cannot be blamed for thinking or doing what they could not have thought or done differently, it does *not* mean that questions of right and wrong, rationality and irrationality, stop with what they are capable of controlling. For example, it may still be argued without incoherence that people ought morally to be totally impartial in their treatment of others, even whilst accepting that as a matter of human disposition such impartiality is unachievable; likewise, the sceptic could claim that, regarding some beliefs, even while we are not to be blamed for our lack of doubt, this does not show that we should not properly feel such doubt, given the inadequacy of our reasons. Thus, it can be said that action *X* is morally better than action *Y*, even if people are such that they can never perform *X*, and so can never be blamed for doing what is (despite this) morally wrong in this case; likewise, it can be said that having some doubt that *p* would be more rational than believing *p* without any doubt, even if our belief-system makes *p* indubitable, and so we can never be blamed for doing what is (despite this) irrational. The

involuntarist response therefore still leaves our belief vulnerable to the sceptic's normative claims.⁶⁰

A final approach might argue that we can claim that the belief is indeed justified, because it is one we find we cannot doubt, without giving up large parts of our belief-system in the process. But this, of course, is precisely to introduce the kind of coherentist claim that we took it the naturalist was trying to avoid, but which (it appears) is not so easily dropped after all. It therefore seems that if we treat transcendental arguments in a modest manner, and in particular if we take them to have a belief-directed form, some appeal to coherence as a legitimate ground for belief will be required, if any satisfactory response to the justificatory sceptic using a belief-directed transcendental argument is to be achieved.

3.3 TRANSCENDENTAL ARGUMENTS AND RELIABILIST JUSTIFICATORY SCEPTICISM

We have uncovered three transcendental argument strategies that have a *prima-facie* possibility of success, when directed against the normativist justificatory sceptic (namely, the phenomenological, the coherentist, and the modest criteriological strategies). However, some may feel that this result is rather meagre, as they may feel that, even if we can answer the normativist justificatory sceptic in this way, this is only a partial response to justificatory scepticism as such, for it does not answer the *reliabilist* justificatory sceptic, as it merely shows that certain beliefs are in line with our 'deepest intellectual procedures', but not that these procedures are truth-conducive; in other words, they will feel that we need some response to the reliabilist sceptic, and hence to the circularity objection he raises. Can transcendental arguments help us with that? In this section the aim is

⁶⁰ I think this helps explain the felt *non sequitur* in the following presentation of the naturalistic response by Grayling: 'Showing that we must have such a belief [in the continued unperceived existence of objects] as a condition of experience is not the same as proving that such objects exist. One is stating what we must believe, not how things are; but since the sceptic wishes us to justify the belief, doing so—the argument goes—is enough to put an end to scepticism' (A. C. Grayling, 'Transcendental Arguments', in Jonathan Dancy and Ernest Sosa (eds.), *A Companion to Epistemology* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1992), 506-9, p. 508).

to explore ways in which transcendental arguments might be used against reliabilist justificatory scepticism, to see whether any plausible truth-directed transcendental arguments can be proposed in this connection, and what scope there is for using transcendental arguments of a more modest type, as part of a less ambitious way of responding to this kind of sceptic.

It will be remembered that the sceptic envisaged here is one who asks us to provide some grounding for our doxastic methods or practices (such as perception and induction), in relation to the goal against which such methods and practices must be judged, namely that they are productive of largely true beliefs. The problem the sceptic raises is one of epistemic circularity: how do we show that our norms and practices are reliable in this way without appeal to just these norms and practices? If such circularity cannot be avoided, while our beliefs might actually be justified in so far as these methods and practices are in fact reliable, we none the less cannot *claim to have* any such justified beliefs, as we cannot show ourselves to have formed our beliefs in the right way (using a method that is reliable, or that we have good grounds for taking to be reliable). Thus, if we endorse an externalist reliabilist or positive internalist reliabilist account of justification, how is reliabilist scepticism to be avoided, in the face of the circularity objection?

In response to this sceptical position, two ways of using transcendental arguments will be considered: what can be called the *reliabilist strategy*, and the *meta-level naturalist strategy*.

3.3.1 The reliabilist strategy

The aim of this strategy is to answer the sceptic by trying to show him that grounds can be given for taking our doxastic methods and practices to be reliable, in a way that does not rest on any claims that have been arrived at using just those methods or practices, thus avoiding circularity.

At its most straightforward, this strategy can take the form of arguing directly that the reliability of a particular empirical doxastic practice, or of all of them together, is a necessary condition of our having thought, language, or experience at all; if a transcendental argument can then be used to establish this reliability a priori, we will have succeeded in grounding this practice without relying on any empirical claims, and thus without begging the question regarding the

reliability of such procedures. A transcendental argument of this sort is outlined by William Alston, following Peter van Inwagen:⁶¹

(i) If (alleged) term 'P' cannot figure in a public language it has no meaning.

(2) If sense perception is not reliable there can be no public language.

Therefore, from (1) and (2)

(3) If sense perception is not reliable, no term can have meaning.

(4) If no term can have a meaning, we cannot raise the issue of the reliability of sense perception.

Therefore, from (4)

(5) If it is possible to raise the issue of the reliability of sense perception, then terms can have meaning.

Therefore, from (3)

(6) If terms can have meaning, sense perception is reliable.

Therefore, from (5) and (6)

(7) If it is possible to raise the issue of the reliability of sense perception, then sense perception is reliable.

Leaving aside possible doubts about the Wittgensteinian first premise, the real difficulty (as Alston points out) is with (2). It seems that the best argument for (2) would be in terms of language acquisition: if a language learner was unable to get reliable perceptual information about others and the world around him, how could he become proficient as a speaker? And if we were all in that situation, how could a public language ever get going? Alston objects, however, that this argument is too empirical and insufficiently conceptual; and in so far as it is thereby based on what our observations tell us, it treats sense perception as a reliable source at the outset, and therefore remains question-beggingly circular.

It might be said, however, that by leaning more heavily on the first premise, about what being a public language involves, then the second premise *can* be made more conceptual: for, whilst Alston suggests that it is conceptually possible to have an innate knowledge of meanings in a language, without observing others or the world, it might be claimed that there *is* something incoherent about this as a possibility: could any speaker ever come to determine the public meanings of words without seeing others using them in relation to

⁶¹ Alston, *The Reliability of Sense Perception*, 55-7.

similar-looking objects, through perceptual experience of a shared world?

The difficulty now, however, is that while this argument supports the claim that a speaker could not learn a language if it did not appear to him that there were other speakers in an environment of objects, and thus if he lacked perceptual experience as of such a world, it does *not* establish that this experience needs be veridical or mostly veridical, and it is therefore insufficient to ground any a priori claims about the reliability of our perceptual methods or norms: why is it that a brain in a vat, stimulated to have just the experiences we do, could not still come to learn and speak a public language, even while all or almost all of its perceptual experiences are of things that do not actually exist? Thus, for now-familiar reasons, the transcendental argument for (2) would appear too weak, given the strength of the premise it is required to support.

Another sort of difficulty in arguing directly for reliabilism is that, while it might be plausible to make a transcendental claim that there must be *some* connection between our belief-forming practices and how things are, this connection cannot be made strong enough for the purposes of the reliabilist, who will characteristically require of a reliable practice that (in Alston's words) 'it would yield mostly true beliefs in a sufficiently large and varied run of employments in situations of the sorts we typically encounter'.⁶² Thus, for example, C. A. J. Coady has argued persuasively that a public language used by a community whose testimony was totally unreliable would have to differ greatly from our own, and indeed might not be possible at all: for, in such a community, there could be no speech act of reporting; no interpretation; and no language acquisition, as language learning requires that neophytes should be truthfully informed or corrected about the meaning of words.⁶³ As against Alston, Coady is keen to stress the conceptual or a priori nature of these claims. However, as Coady rightly recognizes, this argument still falls short of what is required to vindicate testimony in reliabilist terms, for all it does is establish that the possibility of language requires that not all testimony is false, and that perhaps testimony about what words mean must be generally correct; but the first of these conclusions clearly falls short of establishing that testimony is mostly true,

⁶² Ibid. 9.

⁶³ C. A. J. Coady, *Testimony* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 79-100.

whilst the second applies to a domain that is too restricted, namely reports about language. It is also not clear, once again, that the argument does not fall victim to the same sort of standard objection as previously: namely, whilst language might only be possible in a community where testimony correlated to observations to some extent, why could not *both* be totally unreliable with respect to the external world, for example where all language users are subject to the same shared hallucinations?

Now, one way to avoid these sorts of difficulty is to abandon any attempt to argue directly for the reliability of our doxastic practices in this manner, as a condition for thought, language, or experience, but instead to find some other condition for the latter, from which the reliability of our doxastic practices can be inferred. An obvious candidate for such an intermediary step would be *true statements or judgements*, for, if it can be shown on transcendental grounds that most of the judgements or statements we make about the world are true, then it would seem to follow that our doxastic practices are reliable, without any direct dependence needing to be established between the latter and language, thought, or experience.

Such a reliabilist transcendental argument would appear to be part of Davidson's highly complex and subtle anti-sceptical position, one strand of which might be set out as follows:

- (1) If an utterance is not part of a public language, it has no meaning.
- (2) If a language cannot be interpreted by another language-user, it is not public.

Although Davidson does not himself present his starting-point in such explicitly Wittgensteinian terms, I take it that there is no great gap between the latter's (anti-)Private Language Argument and Davidson's contention that 'translatability into a familiar tongue is a criterion of languagehood'.⁶⁴

- (3) In interpreting a speaker's utterances, any interpreter must take them to be mostly true by his (the interpreter's) standards.

This, of course, is Davidson's famous Principle of Charity.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Donald Davidson, 'On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme', reprinted in his *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 183-98, p. 186.

⁶⁵ See Donald Davidson, 'Thought and Talk', reprinted in his *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 155-70, p. 168; and 'On

Therefore, from (3)

(4) In interpreting a speaker's utterances, an omniscient interpreter must take them to be mostly true by his standards.

(5) If an omniscient interpreter interprets most of a speaker's utterances as true by his standards, then they are mostly true.

Davidson introduces the device of the omniscient interpreter in order to get from agreement to truth, which the Principle of Charity on its own cannot do, in so far as the fallible interpreter's own beliefs may be false; but the omniscient interpreter is not fallible in this way, so he bridges the gap between agreement and truth.⁶⁶

Therefore, from (5)

(6) Most of a language-speaker's utterances are true.

(7) If most of a language-speaker's utterances are true, his doxastic practices are reliable.

(8) If our utterances do not have any meaning, then it is impossible for us to raise the question of the reliability of our doxastic practices.

(9) We can raise the question of the reliability of our doxastic practices.

Therefore, from (8) and (9)

(10) Our utterances have meaning.

Therefore, from (1) and (10)

the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme', 196-7; and 'The Method of Truth in Metaphysics', reprinted in *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 199-214, pp. 200-1.

⁶⁶ Cf. Donald Davidson, 'A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge', 317: 'It is an artifact of the interpreter's correct interpretation of a person's speech and attitudes that there is a large degree of truth and consistency in the thought and speech of an agent. But this is truth and consistency by the interpreter's standards. Why couldn't it happen that speaker and interpreter understand one another on the basis of shared but erroneous beliefs? This can, and no doubt often does, happen. But it cannot be the rule. For imagine for a moment an interpreter who is omniscient about the world, and about what does and would cause a speaker to assent to any sentence in his (potentially unlimited) repertoire. The omniscient interpreter, using the same method as the fallible interpreter, finds the fallible speaker largely consistent and correct. By his own standards, of course, but since these are objectively correct, the fallible speaker is seen to be largely consistent and correct by objective standards. We may also, if we want, let the omniscient interpreter turn his attention to the fallible interpreter of the fallible speaker. It turns out that the fallible interpreter can be wrong about some things, but not in general; and so he cannot share universal error with the agent he is interpreting. Once we agree to the general method of interpretation I have sketched, it becomes impossible correctly to hold that anyone could be mostly wrong about how things are.'

- (u) Our utterances form part of a public language.
Therefore, from (6) and (it)
- (12) Most of what we say is true.
Therefore, from (7) and (12)
- (13) Our doxastic practices are reliable.
- (14) Our doxastic practices consist in forming beliefs on the basis of various sorts of criteria: perceptual experience, memory experience, testimony, inference, and so on.
- (15) If belief-forming practices are reliable, then they constitute correct standards of doxastic justification.
Therefore, from (13), (14), and (15)
- (16) Perception, testimony, memory, and so on constitute correct standards of doxastic justification.

It would therefore appear that, using Davidson's argument from interpretation to defend (6), we can go on to defend our belief-forming practices against the reliabilist sceptic, who insists that, for all we know, these practices might fail to be truth-conducive:⁶⁷ by appeal to the necessary conditions of meaning and interpretation, we can supposedly establish what is asked of us here without circularity, as the sceptic demands.

Now, Davidson's argument here has of course proved highly controversial, for familiar reasons: for critics have argued that in fact the transcendental claims it involves are too strong, and that in weakening them to make them plausible we end up with a conclusion that lacks any real anti-sceptical force. One widespread focus of criticism in this respect has been premise (6) and the Principle of Charity that lies behind it: for it is argued that what is required here is not a Principle of Charity, but something more like a Principle of Humanity or Rationality (as it is sometimes called), where a speaker is only interpreted to be speaking falsely when this is explicable given

⁶⁷ Colin McGinn, for example, has interpreted Davidson's position in these terms. Cf. Colin McGinn, 'Radical Interpretation and Epistemology', in Ernest LePore (ed.), *Truth and Interpretation: Perspectives on the Philosophy of Donald Davidson* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 356-68, pp. 358-9: 'For, if it is a condition of having beliefs about (say) the external world or other minds that these beliefs are mainly true; and if it is a condition of having an interpretable language that most of what the speaker says is true: then we know, just by knowing that we believe and speak, that most of what we think and say is true—and so the sceptical claim that we might be globally mistaken about the external world or other minds can be dismissed as inconceivable. There is then no need to provide any demonstration that our particular modes of belief formation in these areas are in fact reliable; we can reject the suggestion that they are not, simply by considering the nature of radical interpretation.'

the speaker's perspective (his lack of information, his background beliefs, etc.). If this is accepted, then, even if the omniscient interpreter is obliged to adopt this weakened principle, he can still have the speaker's beliefs coming out as mostly false, so the conclusion Davidson wants to get to (that our beliefs are mostly true) cannot be reached. Furthermore, as with the approach just discussed, it is objected that Davidson's argument still does not establish that our belief-forming methods are accurate enough to attain the level of truth-conducivity required by the reliabilist to meet his criterion: for, as Davidson himself allows, it is only a requirement on interpretation that 'the plainest and methodologically most basic' of the beliefs attributed to us by the omniscient interpreter are not false,⁶⁸ but this clearly leaves a lot of scope for error, so that the essential reliability of our belief-forming methods has not hereby been established.⁶⁹

It therefore appears that, in following the strategy of using transcendental arguments to establish the reliability of our doxastic norms and practices (either directly or indirectly), we have fallen short of the desired conclusion, for familiar dialectical reasons; to make the transcendental argument convincing, we have to settle for less than the proof of convergence that this strategy demands. It seems that, once again, a truth-directed approach, which attempts to argue for some sort of congruence between our methods and the world on a priori grounds, is too ambitious to be derived from any transcendental argument, making this sort of strategy ineffective against the sceptic.

3.3.2 The meta-level naturalist strategy

One way of responding to this difficulty, as we saw before, is to try to answer the sceptic using a strategy that is less ambitious, and which is therefore less demanding in the kind of conclusion it requires of the transcendental arguments it employs. A more modest strategy of this sort might therefore adopt the kind of naturalistic approach considered in § 3.2.5, but this time at a meta-level, as applied not to particular beliefs (in the external world, other minds, and so on), but to particular belief-forming practices. Such an approach to the

⁶⁸ Davidson, 'A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge', 317.

⁶⁹ For a representative expression of these criticisms in the literature, see Richard Foley, *Working Without a Net* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 67-73.

reliabilist sceptic has recently been put forward by Ralph Walker, as a defence of induction. In his paper 'Induction and Transcendental Argument', Walker accepts that transcendental arguments invariably fail when used in an ambitious, truth-directed way (which he calls 'third-personal'); he therefore attempts to adopt a more modest approach, which uses transcendental arguments to establish that what the sceptic questions is in fact an assumption that we cannot do without, and hence that such scepticism is 'uninteresting' and 'not seriously tenable' (where Walker calls this a 'second-personal' use of transcendental arguments). Walker's position here therefore echoes many of the points made by Strawson and others in adopting the first-level naturalist strategy: scepticism is idle and its demands for grounds empty, in so far as it questions an assumption we could not possibly give up.

One way in which Walker uses this approach in relation to the problem of induction is to argue that we are simply obliged to assume that inductive methods are reliable, claiming that this is sufficient to block reliabilist justificatory scepticism:

Kant's argument about induction ... is inevitably 'in relation to humanity', and there remains a sense in which the sceptical possibility remains. Nobody can really believe it, but that does not show that it cannot be true: the world might be like that after all. Our most elementary assumptions, and our basic principles of inference, might fail to match the way things are . . . The interest of transcendental arguments, or at any rate of transcendental deductions, lies in how they answer [sceptical doubt] when taken in the second-personal way. When they are not understood in that way, too much can be asked of them, and that is why Kant's transcendental defence of induction is sometimes thought not to work. But it does work; it does all that can ever be done, in that it shows the position of the sceptic to be one that none of us can ever seriously hold. What we are left with, as always by arguments of this form, is not the question whether our beliefs are true, or whether our inferential practices are of the right kind to yield truth: that is something on which we can entertain no serious doubt. What we are left with, unavoidably, is the question why they should be true . . . But [this] is a different question entirely.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Walker, 'Induction and Transcendental Argument', 27-9. Cf. also p. 21: 'Nor does it follow [from a second-personal transcendental argument] that laws like the law of non-contradiction must match the way the world is. All that follows is that we must take it for granted that they do, to the extent of relying firmly on the assumption that they do, and being unable to enter into debate with anyone who does not rely on that assumption.'

Now, as I have already suggested, there is indeed some hope that, when used more modestly in this belief-directed manner, transcendental arguments escape many of the criticisms usually levelled against them, so I am sympathetic to the dialectical pressure that leads Walker to give them this 'second-personal' role. The question is, however, whether in saying that we cannot give up the belief that induction is reliable the naturalist has done enough to show that this belief is rational or justified, and thus to block the circularity objection. For reasons given earlier (§ 3.2.5) I would question whether this is so: I would therefore agree with Graham Bird when he observes that 'There is no inference from "no alternative" to "true" or "justified".'⁷¹

It may be, however, that this is not the best way to understand Walker's position, that is, as attempting to meet the circularity objection head on, and hence to block the reliabilist justificatory sceptic directly. Rather, it may be that he is using his belief-directed transcendental argument in a more indirect way, not to show that we are right to believe that induction is reliable, but to show that this is a non-issue, in so far as induction is a justification-conferring method regardless, by virtue of the fact that it is a method we cannot do without. Thus, Walker is perhaps offering us a non-reliabilist account of justification, which (like those discussed in § 1.2) avoids the circularity problem by denying that a method has to be truth-conducive in order to be justification-conferring: on Walker's naturalistic account, a method can be justification-conferring if it is one that the believer cannot help using, where a transcendental argument is then used to establish that this is indeed the case for induction as a method. The following passage suggests that Walker sees the role of transcendental arguments as establishing that certain doxastic practices are indeed indispensable to us in this way, and as thereby showing that beliefs formed in accordance with these indispensable methods are justified:

That is the function of transcendental arguments, when they are construed in the second-personal way. They provide us with a justification for relying on, for example, induction, which is not just 'internal': they tell us something more than that induction is one of the methods that govern our thought. They tell us that we are right to let our thought be governed in that way,

⁷¹ Graham Bird, 'Kant and the Problem of Induction: A Reply to Walker', in Robert Stem (ed.), *Transcendental Arguments: Problems and Prospects* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 31-46, p. 38.

because we have no alternative but to adopt induction by the straight rule as a norm for non-deductive inference.⁷²

Thus, by appealing to a naturalistic account of justification, whereby a belief is justified if it is produced by an indispensable belief-forming method, Walker would seem able to avoid the circularity objection, as the issue here is whether or not induction is indispensable in this way, *not* whether it is reliable; transcendental arguments are therefore required merely to establish the former, not the latter, and so can take a belief-directed rather than truth-directed form.

On this account of Walker's position, however, we have still not used a *transcendental argument* to respond to reliabilist justificatory scepticism; for what does the work here is the switch from a reliabilist account of justification to a naturalist account, which in itself renders the circularity objection redundant. Put another way: those who take the circularity objection seriously in the first place will just not accept Walker's account of justification, and there is nothing in the transcendental arguments he offers to make them change their minds. We have therefore still failed to see how transcendental arguments *per se* can be made effective against reliabilist justificatory scepticism (for all Walker's argument shows us is that such scepticism can be avoided by adopting a non-reliabilist account of justification, something we knew all along, where this is a move we can make without bringing in transcendental arguments).

Moreover, while admittedly none of the accounts of justification that are immune from the circularity objection which we looked at in § i .2 are without difficulties, the naturalistic account Walker seems to be appealing to here is particularly suspect, in its claim that 'we are right to let our thought be governed in that way, because we have no alternative but to adopt induction by the straight rule'.⁷³

⁷² Walker, 'Induction and Transcendental Argument', 27.

⁷³ Cf. also *ibid.* 23: 'Transcendental arguments, taken in the second-personal way, answer this. Certainly we are entitled to do so, and for the best possible reason: there is no serious alternative available to us. To attempt to adopt an alternative would be to place oneself wholly beyond argument. If then we have no choice in whether we adopt these norms, what could be the point of suggesting we are not entitled to? Sometimes the idea seems to be that they are not really norms at all, but only habits of human thought. But that contrast is misleading. No doubt they are in a sense habits of human thought, habits we could not do without. That does not stop them from being norms which we all must, and do, recognize as norms governing our arguments and inferences. Even the sceptic must rely on them as such, as we have just seen, so what is the point of raising a doubt as to whether they *are* norms?'

The problem here is that this again seems to be based on the naturalistic misunderstanding regarding ‘ought implies can’, and hence muddles Z>e/iever-justification with fte/ze/-justification: that is, whilst a believer who is obliged to reason in a certain way cannot be blamed for so doing, and so is justified in this sense, it does not follow from this that the beliefs he forms are *themselves* rational or justified, as it surely is the case that an unjustified belief can be held by someone whose inability to think otherwise makes him blameless (just as it is the case that an unjustified action can be carried out by someone who cannot be blamed for so acting, because he was unable to act in any other way). Given this distinction, it is hard to see how the naturalistic account of justification can be made to work.

It therefore seems that, once again, we must conclude that our search for a convincing role for transcendental arguments in refuting reliabilist scepticism has ended in failure, and for similar reasons as previously: whilst the reliabilist transcendental argument strategy was unexceptionable in itself, the transcendental claims it required were too strong to be defended plausibly; and whilst the meta-level naturalist strategy uses more modest claims, the strategy itself appears inadequate in the context of the sceptical position it is addressing. The lesson from this investigation is therefore that only when used against normativist justificatory scepticism can a positive role for transcendental arguments of a modest kind be found.

3.4 SUMMARY AND PROSPECTS

This concludes my rather lengthy overview of the way in which various sceptical positions make room for some sort of response using transcendental arguments, and my general assessment of what sorts of transcendental arguments these responses require and how successful they are likely to be. The terrain we have covered is mapped as in Figure 2 (where ‘TA_t’ represents a transcendental argument strategy that is truth-directed; ‘TA_b’ one that is belief-directed; ‘TA_c’ one that is concept-directed; and ‘TA_e’ one that is experience-directed). I hope to have suggested, at least in a preliminary way, how a satisfactory role for transcendental arguments might be found in relation to normativist scepticism, using either the phenomenological or coherentist or modest criteriological transcendental argument strategies. As predicted at the outset, those strategies that have used truth-directed transcendental arguments have come up

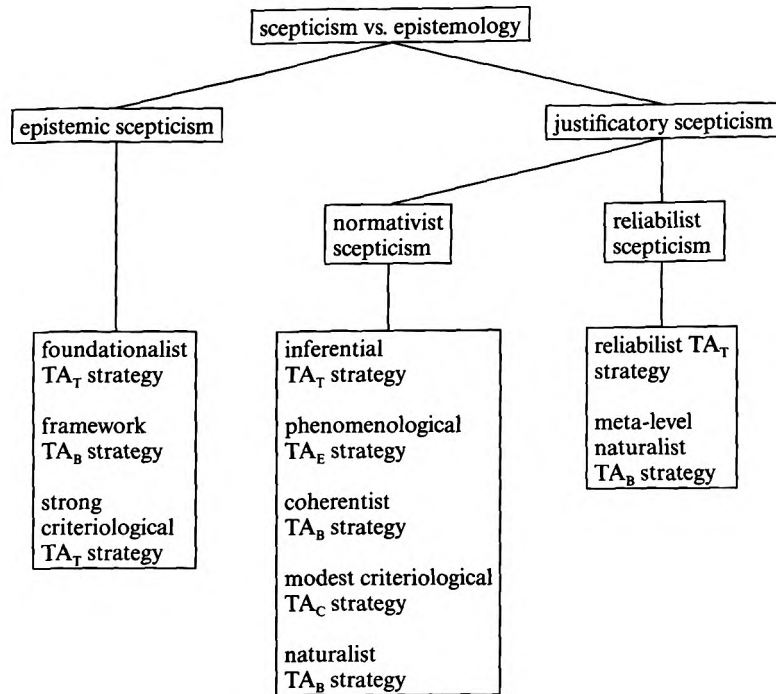


Fig. 2

against the standard objections discussed in Chapter 2, whilst those that have tried to make do with less have invariably failed in relation to the more ambitious sceptical targets. None the less, in the case of the strategies considered in §§ j.2.2-3.2.4, we seem to have got the combination right.

It may be felt, however, that this is altogether a rather disappointing result, as it has been conceded that in relation to two of its most prominent forms, namely epistemic and reliabilist justificatory scepticism, the use of transcendental arguments is unsustainable as an anti-sceptical device. It might also be assumed that, in granting this concession, all the central examples of transcendental arguments in the canon, from Kant to Strawson and beyond, are hereby admitted to be flawed, as these have just such anti-sceptical goals. In this way, it may be felt that the concessiveness of my approach has robbed transcendental arguments of any interest they may once have seemed to have, at least from an epistemological point of view.

This is not how I see things, however. For, first, whilst it is certainly true that epistemic and reliabilist justificatory scepticism put forward some of the most vivid sceptical challenges, I hope to show that it should not thereby be assumed that they constitute the most interesting or important forms of scepticism. In fact, I will argue, it is normativist justificatory scepticism that poses the real sceptical threat and is the most potent sceptical challenge, partly because (as we have already observed) weakness here is strength: by allowing us to preserve so much of what we take for granted, rather than in challenging it in a revisionist manner, the normativist sceptic's conclusions are all the more potent and surprising, more forcefully undercutting our self-belief as rational inquirers by working from the 'inside' (as it were). Moreover, even if it has turned out that transcendental arguments can be used against the normativist sceptic but not against the reliabilist sceptic, this does not show that someone who holds a reliabilist theory of justification can then ignore them, for the normativist objection is a problem for the reliabilist too: even if he can establish that certain grounds for belief are truth-conducive and hence justification-conferring, he still needs to show that particular beliefs (in the existence of the external world, other minds, etc.) do in fact have such grounds. So even for the reliabilist transcendental arguments will be needed to address this normativist issue. And secondly, I also hope to show that many of the paradigmatic transcendental arguments to be found in Kant and elsewhere are best interpreted and understood as examples of one or other of the transcendental argument strategies I favour, and as directed precisely at the normativist sceptic, not his epistemic and reliabilist cousins. There is therefore no need to feel that in endorsing the conclusions of this chapter, the tradition is then overturned: on the contrary, I will try to show how it can now be seen in a new and more favourable light.

The aim of the next three chapters is thus to make good on these claims, whilst adding detail to how the phenomenological, coherentist, and modest criteriological transcendental argument strategies operate in response to normativist justificatory scepticism. This aim will be carried out by considering three central sceptical problems from this perspective, together with some of the transcendental claims that have been used to meet them: namely, the problems of the external world, of causation, and of other minds, where each strategy will be deployed respectively against the normativist justificatory sceptic on these issues.

The Problem of the External World

In this chapter, we will be considering the problem of the external world, and to what extent transcendental arguments can be used to address it. My claim will be that whilst such arguments cannot be used successfully when the problem is posed in epistemic or reliabilist terms, they have much greater force when it is put in a normativist manner. It will be shown how the failure of transcendental arguments to refute epistemic scepticism (in arguments put forward by Putnam, and the early Strawson) has led to the view that their only role can be to 'silence' scepticism, to show how (in Strawson's words) 'it is idle, unreal, a pretence'.¹ I will argue, however, that transcendental arguments can do considerably more than this in relation to normativist justificatory scepticism over the external world, and that the latter provides an ideal target both for Kant's Refutation of Idealism and for Hegel's arguments in the Consciousness section of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

4.1 THE PROBLEM OF THE EXTERNAL WORLD AND VARIETIES OF SCEPTICISM

As will be clear from what has just been said, 'the problem of the external world' as it arises in the philosophical literature is not univocal: rather, it can be used to highlight several distinct sceptical issues and concerns.

Given the association of this problem with Descartes, and given his strongly infallibilist conception of knowledge, it is perhaps most natural to see the problem in the following terms: can we know (with certainty) that anything exists outside our own minds? A standard formulation of this scepticism would be that I can only be sure of how things seem to me, not how they are; another, that I can only

¹ Strawson, *Skepticism and Naturalism*, 19.

be certain that I and my mental states exist, and so have no knowledge concerning the subject-independent world in which I am having these mental states (or even that there is such a world). This is probably the 'textbook' version of the problem of the external world, as raised by the epistemic sceptic, using an infallibilist conception of knowledge, which rules out knowledge where there is any room for doubt concerning the truth of the proposition believed.

As Richard Fumerton has rightly observed, however, when presented in this 'textbook' way, the sceptical position can quickly come to lose its interest:

When Descartes wanted knowledge, he wanted the absolute inconceivability of error. Descartes was convinced that he could withstand a skeptical challenge with respect to the possibility of getting this sort of knowledge, but few contemporary philosophers, myself included, think that there is any chance of defeating skepticism with respect to most commonsense knowledge claims if we employ a Cartesian conception of knowledge. Indeed, my own experience has been that the undergraduates we expect to be so outraged with the opening Cartesian skeptical worries of the *Meditations* soon respond with a shrug of their shoulders. So you cannot know with an *absolute certainty* that precludes any *conceivability of error* that there is a physical world. What did you expect? These kids were raised on *Star Trek*, where massive hallucination, mind transfers, and general sensory distortion form the plot lines of every second episode. In short, if we understand knowledge in terms of the inconceivability of error, the skeptical challenge becomes uninteresting because it is just too obvious who is going to win the debate.²

It would seem, then, that if the problem of the external world can only be posed in these terms, so that certainty regarding the existence of material objects is the central issue, it could only be made compelling to those who share Descartes's over-ambitious desire to show that we can have such a high level of epistemic achievement in this area.

However, it is clear that even in relation to Descartes's own presentation of it, the problem of the external world has much wider sceptical scope. One way in which this can be seen is in connection with the dream argument, aspects of which raise reliabilist and not just infallibilist concerns: even if we can tell the difference between experiencing something in a dream and experiencing it perceptually,

² Fumerton, *Metaepistemology and Skepticism*, 4.

what grounds have we got for holding that the latter provides reliable information about the external world, much less certainty? Descartes points out that for all we can tell from the nature of the experience itself, it might be as misleading as the experiences we have when dreaming:³ but then, if (as seems plausible) all our beliefs about the external world are based on perception, we apparently have no *independent* means of gauging its reliability either. On this account, therefore, the problem of the external world is less about certainty than about how we can come to any sort of reflective judgement on the reliability of those doxastic practices we use to form beliefs about it, a reflective judgement which the reliabilist takes to be required if we are to claim that those beliefs are justified. Jay Rosenberg puts the difficulty as follows:

The problem, to put it in its shortest form, is that there is no place to stand. We lack a means of *comparing* our putative representations with that which they putatively represent. We cannot hold up our representations alongside the world and thereby assess their adequacy *to* it, their correctness or incorrectness, for *all* our ostensible commerce with that world is mediated by representations. At best, we could compare our representations only with one another. We cannot compare them with the world. And, if this is so, the challenge runs, we cannot compare them in point of adequacy *to* that world. Our basis of comparison must be something else, something *internal* to the systems of representations themselves. But nothing internal to such a system of representations can bear upon its adequacy to something external to it—and the world which realism posits is just such an external something.⁴

Aside from epistemic scepticism, the problem of the external world is therefore also one that can be exploited by the reliabilist justificatory sceptic, who will set out to show how difficult it is to establish that what we are told about the external world through our senses is generally the case.

³ 'every sensory experience I have ever thought I was having while awake I can also think of myself as sometimes having while asleep; and since I do not believe that what I seem to perceive in sleep comes from things located outside of me, I did not see why I should be any more inclined to believe this of what I think I perceive while awake' (René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, 2 vols., trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoorhoff, and Dugald Murdoch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), ii. 1-62, p. 53).

⁴ Jay Rosenberg, *One World and Our Knowledge of It* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1980), 88.

In addition to this difficulty, the problem of the external world can also be presented in another way, as raising the question of how belief in the existence of subject-independent objects can be shown to be warranted by any of our doxastic methods, and thus whether our common-sense conviction that there are such objects is indeed rationally legitimate. Descartes, again, can be seen as open to this treatment of the problem, in his presentation of the sceptical scenarios of the dream and the evil demon: what right have we to infer that the experiences we are having are caused by physical objects, when there are other hypotheses available that fit the data just as well? Here the sceptic is appealing to the fact that another conception of things is equally compatible with the evidence we have, so that we would be wrong (given this equipollence) to commit ourselves to our ordinary view of the world in preference to his alternatives.

However, the most developed and sophisticated treatment of the problem of the external world from the perspective of normativist scepticism is to be found not in Descartes, but in Hume, particularly in the *Treatise*. Hume distinguished between two aspects of our belief in the external world, namely, that things continue to exist when unperceived (let us call this the *independence* aspect) and that things have an existence that is distinct from and outside the mind (let us call this the *externality* aspect).⁵ Hume then asks whether either the senses or reason can be used to legitimate this conception of the external world, or whether it has its source in the non-rational imagination, which would explain how the belief comes about, but without justifying it.

He first considers whether the evidence of our senses alone can warrant our belief in the externality of objects; whilst he admits that at first this seems possible, on a closer consideration of the content of experience, it becomes clear that this cannot be so:

To begin with the question concerning *external* existence, it may perhaps be said, that setting aside the metaphysical question of the identity of a thinking substance, our own body evidently belongs to us; and as several impressions appear exterior to the body, we suppose them also exterior to ourselves. The paper, on which I write at present, is beyond my hand. The table is beyond the paper. The walls of the chamber beyond the table. And in casting my eye towards the window, I perceive a great extent of fields

⁵ Hume, *Treatise*, book I, part IV, § 2, p. 188.

and buildings beyond my chamber. From all this it may be infer'd, that no other faculty is requir'd, beside the senses, to convince us of the external existence of body. But to prevent this inference, we need only weigh the three following considerations. *First*, That, properly speaking, 'tis not our body we perceive, when we regard our limbs and members, but certain impressions, which enter by the senses; so that the ascribing a real and corporeal existence to these impressions, or to their objects, is an act of the mind as difficult to explain, as that which we examine at present. *Secondly*, Sounds, and tastes, and smells, tho' commonly regarded by the mind as continu'd independent qualities, appear not to have any existence in extension, and consequently cannot appear to the senses as situated externally to the body. The reason, why we ascribe a place to them, shall be consider'd afterwards. *Thirdly*, Even our sight informs us not of distance or outness (so to speak) immediately and without a certain reasoning and experience, as is acknowledg'd by the most rational philosophers.⁶

Hume is then equally quick to dismiss the possibility that our senses could warrant belief in the independence of physical objects, as we cannot use our perception to tell us that something exists unperceived. He therefore concludes that belief in the external world cannot be justified in perceptual terms.

Equally, however, he argues that it cannot be justified indirectly either, through some sort of causal inference.⁷ He claims that 'the vulgar' cannot do so, because they do not recognize that the world is not immediately perceived, and so can make no use of an inference from what they see to how things are; but even if (as philosophers) we make such a distinction, and recognize that perception only carries information about sense qualities, such an inference cannot be made good, as he explains in greater detail later:

⁶ Hume, *Treatise*, book I, part IV, § 2, pp. 190-1. On the third point, cf. also Hume's discussion of 'the ideas of space and time' in book I, part II, esp. § 5, p. 56: 'Tis commonly allow'd by philosophers, that all bodies, which discover themselves to the eye, appear as if painted on a plain surface, and that their different degrees of remoteness from ourselves are discover'd more by reason than by the senses.' The theory Hume is referring to here is that of Berkeley, as presented in his *An Essay Towards a New Theory of Vision*: cf. George Berkeley, *Philosophical Works*, ed. M. R. Ayers (London; J. M. Dent, 1975), § 41, p. 19: 'From what hath been premised it is a manifest consequence that a man born blind, being made to see, would, at first, have no idea of distance by sight; the sun and the stars, the remotest objects as well as the nearer, would all seem to be in his eye, or rather in his mind. The objects intromitted by sight would seem to him (as in truth they are) no other than a new set of thoughts or sensations, each whereof is as near to him as the perceptions of pain and pleasure, or the most inward passions of his soul.'

⁷ Hume, *Treatise*, book I, part IV, § 2, p. 193.

As to the first part of the proposition, *that this philosophical hypothesis* [that objects have a continued and independent existence] *has no primary recommendation, either to reason or the imagination*, we may soon satisfy ourselves with regard to *reason* by the following reflections. The only existences, of which we are certain, are perceptions, which being immediately present to us by consciousness, command our strongest assent, and are the first foundation of all our conclusions. The only conclusion we can draw from the existence of one thing to that of another, is by means of the relation of cause and effect, which shews, that there is a connexion betwixt them, and that the existence of one is dependent on that of the other. The idea of this relation is deriv'd from past experience, by which we find, that two beings are constantly conjoin'd together, and are always present at once to the mind. But as no beings are ever present to the mind but perceptions; it follows that we may observe a conjunction or a relation of cause and effect between different perceptions, but can never observe it between perceptions and objects. 'Tis impossible, therefore, that from the existence of any of the qualities of the former, we can ever form any conclusion concerning the existence of the latter, or ever satisfy our reason in this particular.⁸

Hume's sceptical position is thus that our belief in the existence of external objects cannot be grounded in reason, as reason cannot warrant any inference from our subjective experience to outer objects as their likely causes. Hume is not here critical of inductive inferences of this sort as such, but is merely pointing out the inapplicability of such inferences in this context, when it is hard to see how we could ever have an inductive base of confirmed instances, given that all we have to go on are experiences, not any independently established causal correlation between those experiences and objects themselves.

After drawing a blank with the senses and reason in this way, Hume then concludes that only the imagination can explain why we have such a tenacious belief in the existence of the external world. He takes himself to have shown that, phenomenologically speaking, all impressions appear to the mind in the same way, as internal, but some then have further features that cause it to believe that they are impressions of external things:

Since all impressions are internal and perishing existences, *and appear as such*, the notion of their distinct and continu'd existence must arise from a

⁸ Ibid. 212. For an equivalent statement of this argument in the *Enquiries*, see David Hume, *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, 3rd edn., rev. P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 153.

concurrence of some of their qualities with the qualities of the imagination; and since this notion does not extend to all of them, it must arise from certain qualities peculiar to some impressions. 'Twill therefore be easy for us to discover these qualities by a comparison of the impressions, to which we attribute a distinct and continu'd existence, with those, which we regard as internal and perishing.'

Hume's positive account of the role of the imagination is complex, and need not concern us in any detail here; but, briefly, he argues that the series of our continually changing sense impressions have aspects of *constancy* and *coherence*, and these naturally operate on the mind to cause us to believe that they relate to objects that have a distinct and independent existence.

Hume's position here is therefore sceptical, not on epistemic or reliabilist grounds, but as regards our right to belief in the external world, given the experience he takes us to have: as neither the senses nor reason can provide this belief with an adequate basis, he takes this to show that it cannot be justified in accordance with any legitimate belief-forming method. He is happy to concede, however, that this does not mean we can or should give this belief up, for he accepts that nature makes this impossible, through the causal power of our imagination. Hume's naturalistic scepticism is none the less a conscious challenge to our image of ourselves as rational inquirers guided in our beliefs by canons of right-thinking laid down by doxastic norms: in our beliefs about the external world, we find that our belief is determined by non-rational factors, and that it is impossible to offer any adequate justification for our position, whilst none the less we cannot bring ourselves to abandon it.^{9 10}

⁹ *Treatise*, book I, part IV, § 2, p. 194, my emphasis. Cf. also *ibid.* 190: 'Add to this, that every impression, external and internal, passions, affections, sensations, pains and pleasures, are originally on the same footing; and that whatever other differences we may observe among them, they appear, all of them, in their true colours, as impressions or perceptions.' Hume makes the same point *ibid.* 192-3.

¹⁰ Cf. Maurice Mandelbaum, '“Of Scepticism with Regard to the Senses”', in his *Philosophy, Science, and Sense Perception* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1964), 118-70, p. 148: 'the reliance which I have placed upon our belief in [external] objects leads one to ask whether a belief of this kind could ever be justified. That we do have such beliefs no one has insisted more strongly than Hume himself; what he challenged was the possibility of citing any evidence to show that our belief is warranted. His challenge at this point does not consist in examining specific arguments which realists might be expected to offer; instead, he attempts to solve the matter at a stroke by showing that no adequate arguments of the sort could in fact ever be given.'

It therefore appears that any assessment of transcendental arguments in providing a response to ‘the problem of the external world’ must be sensitive to the way in which this problem involves a range of sceptical challenges, and must be careful to judge any particular transcendental argument against the right sceptical target. We will now consider a variety of attempts that have been made to use transcendental arguments against the sceptic on this issue;¹¹ it will be argued that those that fail do so because they conceive their goal too ambitiously, but that, when used against the problem as it is posed by the normativist sceptic, transcendental arguments have a much greater degree of success, so that the best hope of employing them is as an anti-sceptical strategy that operates in these terms.

4.2 PUTNAM’S REFUTATION OF THE BRAIN-IN-A-VAT HYPOTHESIS

Of recent attempts to use transcendental arguments against the sceptic, few are more ambitious than that put forward by Putnam in chapter 1 of *Reason, Truth and History*, and none have attracted so much critical comment. Putnam’s apparent goal is to refute a modern-day version of Descartes’s evil demon hypothesis, according to which I do not inhabit a world containing ordinary physical objects (trees, tables, houses), but am a brain in a lab whose experiences are caused by a computer artificially stimulating my nerve endings, so that none of these objects actually exist beyond my hallucinatory impression of them. This is the brain-in-a-vat hypothesis, and it stands for the possibility that, for all I know, nothing rules out the world being very different from how it appears to me to be, given the gap that exists between appearance (our experience of it) and reality.

Now, Putnam’s response to the sceptic is to argue that though we cannot rule out the brain-in-a-vat hypothesis on the grounds of how things appear to us, we can rule it out none the less. How? Putnam’s initial claim seems to be that we can rule it out because on a plausible theory of reference it is self-refuting: that is, ‘I am’¹¹

¹¹ Given what has just been said concerning the reliabilist aspect of this question, the transcendental arguments we discussed in § 3.3.1 could also be considered here; but this would clearly involve needless repetition, so the reader is simply referred back to this earlier section on this issue.

not a brain-in-a-vat [or BIV, for short]' cannot ever be truly denied by anyone. The theory of reference Putnam uses as a premise is a causal one, which states that 'one cannot refer to certain kinds of things, e.g. *trees*, if one has no causal interaction at all with them, or with things in terms of which they can be described'.¹² Putnam defends this theory, on the grounds that it alone can explain how reference occurs in a way that is not 'magical', i.e. which does not assume that the connection is just somehow intrinsic between representations and their referents. It then follows that BIVs, who radically differ from non-BIVs in the causal interaction they have with the world, may employ the same sort of representations as non-BIVs, but cannot refer to the same things; and since thinking about *As* involves the use of representations that refer to *As*, then BIVs cannot think about what non-BIVs think about either. Thus, while non-BIVs can think about trees, tables, and brains in vats, BIVs cannot, as they have no causal interaction with such things; instead, they can only think about whatever aspects of the computer program control their images, so that when a BIV thinks 'I am a BIV' it means something different from when a non-BIV utters the same sound. Now, as a result of this referential shift, Putnam argued that the sentence 'I am not a BIV' cannot be truly denied by anyone: for if a non-BIV denies it, it is clearly false, while if a BIV denies it, it is now asserting that it is a BIV-in-the-image, which is *also* false, so it cannot ever be wrong to assert that one is not a BIV, so that in this sense 'I am not a BIV' is an incorrigible claim:

By the same argument, 'vat' refers to vats in the image in vat-English, or something related (electronic impulses or program features), but certainly not to real vats, since the use of 'vat' in vat-English has no causal connections to real vats ... It follows that if their 'possible world' is really the actual one, and we are really the brains in a vat, then what we now mean by 'we are brains in a vat' is that *we are brains in a vat in the image* or something of that kind (if we mean anything at all). But part of the hypothesis that we are brains in a vat is that we aren't brains in a vat in the image (i.e. what we are 'hallucinating' isn't that we are brains in a vat). So, if we are brains in a vat, then the sentence 'We are brains in a vat' says something false (if it says anything). In short, if we are brains in a vat, then 'We are brains in a vat' is false. So it is (necessarily) false.¹³

¹² Hilary Putnam, *Reason, Truth and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 16-17.

¹³ Ibid. 14-15.

So, Putnam argues that we can rule out the BIV hypothesis on a priori grounds, in so far as the statement 'I am not a BIV' cannot be denied truly by anyone, just like the statement 'I exist' or 'I can construct a meaningful sentence'.

Putnam is keen to emphasize the transcendental nature of his enterprise in this respect. He stresses that the kinds of constraint on reference that operate here and disprove the BIV hypothesis are not physical or merely analytic, but involve limitations on what is possible that can be arrived at through philosophical reflection on the nature of representation and meaning, and hence fit into a Kantian model of how to respond to scepticism:

What we have been doing is considering the *preconditions for thinking about, representing, referring to*, etc. We have investigated these preconditions *not* by investigating the meaning of these words and phrases (as a linguist might, for example) but by *reasoning a priori*. Not in the old 'absolute' sense (since we do not claim that magical theories of reference are *a priori* wrong), but in the sense of inquiring into what is *reasonably* possible *assuming* certain general premisses, or making certain very broad theoretical assumptions. Such a procedure is neither 'empirical' nor quite 'a priori', but has elements of both ways of investigating. In spite of the fallibility of my procedure, and its dependence upon assumptions which might be described as 'empirical' (e.g. the assumption that the mind has no access to external things or properties apart from that provided by the senses), my procedure has a close relation to what Kant called a 'transcendental' investigation; for it is an investigation, I repeat, of the *preconditions* of reference and hence of thought—preconditions built in to the nature of our minds themselves, though not (as Kant hoped) wholly independent of empirical assumptions.¹⁴

In this respect, Putnam has had an important influence in reviving interest in the possibility of using transcendental arguments against scepticism.

However, it is easy to see that there are difficulties with the argument as presented above. The concern can be put as follows: whereas in the case of a statement like 'I exist' it cannot be truly denied because to attempt to do so the speaker must exist, in the case of a statement like 'I am not a BIV', this cannot be truly denied because the referential shift makes it unsayable in the right way. Thus, whereas the *Cogito* rests on the fact that existence is a necessary condition for any sort of speech act, the impossibility of truly denying

¹⁴ Ibid. 16.

'I am not a BIV' rests on the *limitations* of language, not on its conditions, thereby making it impossible to use these words to utter a false proposition, but in an unsatisfactory way. As Thomas Nagel has put this worry:

If I accept the argument, I must conclude that a brain in a vat can't think truly that it is a brain in a vat, even though others can think this about it. What follows? Only that I can't express my skepticism by saying 'Perhaps I'm a brain in a vat'. Instead I must say, 'Perhaps I can't even *think* the truth about what I am, because I lack the necessary concepts and my circumstances make it impossible for me to acquire them!' If this doesn't qualify as skepticism, I don't know what does.¹⁵

It might be said, however, that Putnam does not really need to use this incorrigibility or self-refutation argument to show that we are not BI Vs, but can argue more directly for this conclusion, from the fact that we can have thoughts about brains and vats, which would not be possible if we were BI Vs, when all our thoughts could only be about brains-in-the-image and so on. One way of putting the argument in this form is as follows:¹⁶

- (1) I can think that I am a brain in a vat.
 - (2) If I am a brain in a vat, then I cannot think I am a brain in a vat.
- Therefore
- (3) I am not a brain in a vat.

Even put like this, however, Putnam's position has been heavily criticized.

A first concern about this argument is that its anti-sceptical force is quite limited, as it cannot be a condition of our genuinely referring to a given object that we are having some causal interaction with it *at present*, so, as many have observed, the second premise only holds if its antecedent is that I have *always* been a BIV, not if I have recently been envatted having had past causal contact with the world, for then the causal theory will allow that thoughts about brains and vats is possible for me. The argument should therefore be weakened to:

¹⁵ Nagel, *The View from Nowhere*, 73.

¹⁶ Cf. Marian David, 'Neither Mentioning "Brains in a Vat" Nor Mentioning Brains in a Vat Will Prove that We are Not Brains in a Vat', *Philosophical and Phenomenological Research*, 51 (1991), 891-6, p. 891.

- (i) I can think I am a brain in a vat.
- (2) If I have always been a brain in a vat, then I cannot think I am a brain in a vat.

Therefore

- (3) I have not always been a brain in a vat (though *I* may be one now).

But when weakened in this way the argument loses much of its anti-sceptical force.

A second concern relates to the justification for the first premise. The worry is this: if the argument is meant to settle whether or not I am a BIV, I should be able to assert the first premise without knowing the answer to this question. However, Putnam's content externalism makes it difficult to see how I can do this, for what thoughts I am having is not to be determined simply through introspection, but will depend on the causal relations between myself and the world. It therefore appears that unless I already know (3), I cannot be in a position to assert (1), making the argument epistemically circular.¹⁷

It therefore appears that Putnam's argument cannot be used to refute the BIV hypothesis, as an updated form of Cartesian scepticism concerning our knowledge of the external world.

4 .3 STRAWSON'S OBJECTIVITY ARGUMENT

Putnam's attempt to refute the Cartesian sceptic bears no direct similarity to any argument offered by Kant, and is Kantian only in making a priori claims that none the less seem substantive but on an issue not taken up in this way by Kant, concerning the conditions for reference and meaning. By contrast, Strawson's objectivity argument in *The Bounds of Sense* is presented as a sympathetic reconstruction of central parts of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Strawson hereby attempts to make Kant's use of transcendental arguments explicit, whilst trying to show what is of philosophical value in them. This attempt remains controversial, however, on both interpretative and philosophical grounds; we will postpone consideration of the

¹⁷ Cf. Anthony Brueckner, 'Transcendental Arguments from Content Externalism', 238: '[I]n order to know, or have justification for believing, the argument's self-knowledge premiss, I need to know, or have justification for believing, its conclusion.'

former controversy to the next section, when I will present my own account of Kant's position, so that only problems raised by Strawson's argument taken in its own right will be presented here.

At the outset of his discussion, Strawson suggests that the epistemic sceptic is Kant's target, claiming that 'a major part of the role of the Deduction will be to *establish* that experience necessarily involves knowledge of *objects*, in the weighty sense',¹⁸ where he earlier makes clear that by the latter he takes Kant to mean objects as having subject-independence.¹⁹ When presenting an outline summary of the goal of the Transcendental Analytic, of which the Transcendental Deduction, First Analogy, and Refutation of Idealism all form parts, Strawson refers to this conclusion as 'the thesis of objectivity', which he characterizes as follows:

... that experience must include awareness of objects which are distinguishable from experiences of them in the sense that judgements about these objects are judgements about what is the case irrespective of the actual occurrence of particular subjective experiences of them.²⁰

On this Strawsonian account, then, Kant is read as attempting to provide an argument for this thesis in the hope that he could thereby overcome what he called the 'scandal to philosophy . . . that the existence of things outside us . . . must be accepted merely on *faith*, and if anyone thinks good to doubt their existence, we are unable to counter his doubts by any satisfactory proof'.²¹

Based on his interpretation of the Transcendental Deduction, Strawson gives an argument for the objectivity thesis that may be outlined as follows:

¹⁸ Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense*, 88.

¹⁹ Ibid. 73: 'As [Kant's] investigation proceeds, however, we become aware that the word "object" is to be taken more weightily than we might at first have thought. It means something more than merely a particular instance of a general concept. It carries connotations of "objectivity". To know something about an object, e.g. that it falls under such-and-such a general concept, is to know something that holds irrespective of the occurrence of any particular state of consciousness, irrespective of the occurrence of any particular experience of awareness of the object as falling under the general concept in question. Judgements about objects, if valid, are objectively valid, valid independently of the occurrence of the particular state of awareness, of the particular experience, which issues in the judgement.' Although I am following the standard reading of Strawson here, it should be noted that his characterization of this 'weighty' sense of 'object' is not without its ambiguities: see Graham Bird, 'Recent Interpretations of Kant's Transcendental Deduction', *Akten des 4. Internationalen Kant-Kongresses*, Part I, in Gerhard Funke and Joachim Kopper (eds.), *Kant-Studien*, 65, Sonderheft (1974), 1–14.

²⁰ Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense*, 24.

²¹ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Bxxxix n.

- (1) Being self-conscious is a matter of being able to ascribe diverse experiences to oneself, whilst being conscious of the unity of that to which they are ascribed.
- (2) To be in a position to think of experiences *as* one's own, one must be able to think of them *as* experiences.
- (3) For experiences to be such as to provide room for thought of experience itself, it must provide room for a distinction between 'This is how things are' and 'This is how things are experienced as being'.
- (4) Only experience of objects that are subject-independent could provide room for this is/seems distinction.

Therefore

- (5) Subject-independent objects exist.

The first premise is Strawson's gloss on Kant's claim that 'all my representations in any given intuition must be subject to that condition under which alone I can ascribe them to the identical self as my representations, and so can comprehend them as synthetically combined in one apperception through the general expression, "*Z think*"',²² Strawson stresses that such self-ascription need not be an actual feature of all experiences: it must merely be *possible* for the subject to reflect on an experience in this way, for it to count as his. For this to be the case, Strawson argues, it then follows that the subject must be able to conceptualize his experience *as* his experience, as representing his point of view on the world. Now, for this conceptualization to be possible in turn, Strawson claims, the subject must have experiences of things that will enable him to distinguish between how they appear to him and how they are. This would not be possible, he argues, if the subject had a pure sense-datum experience: what is required is experience of objects whose existence is not exhausted by the subject's view of them, that is, objects that exist in a world outside the consciousness of the individual who experiences them. Strawson summarizes his argument thus:

For 'This is how things are (have been) experienced *by me* as being' presupposes 'This is how things are (have been) *experienced* as being'; and the latter in turn presupposes a distinction, though not (usually) an opposition between 'This is how things are experienced as being' and 'Thus and so is how things are'.²³

²² Ibid. Bi 38; cf. also B131-3. On this premise, see Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense*, 98.

²³ Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense*, 108.

Having presented this account of the Transcendental Deduction, Strawson then goes on to extend his discussion into the First Analogy and the Refutation of Idealism, arguing that these later parts of the *Critique* do nothing more than consider in further detail what the nature of these objects must be, which enable us to draw the is/seems distinction that is required for self-consciousness to be possible.²⁴ In particular, Kant (on Strawson's view) now adds the claim that the subject must be able to distinguish between the temporal order in which he has experiences and the temporal relation that exists between the objects he is experiencing. For this to be possible, Strawson claims, Kant argued that the subject must be aware of objects that exist in a spatial framework outside itself:

we must perceive some *objects* as enduring objects, even if our perceptions of them do not endure, must see them as falling under concepts of persisting objects, even though objects of non-persistent perceptions. The idea of a subjective experiential route through an objective world depends on the idea of the identity of that world through and in spite of the changes in our experience; and this in turn depends on our perceiving objects as having a permanence independent of our perceptions of them, and hence being able to identify objects as numerically the same in different perceptual situations.²⁵

Strawson's position here has therefore been taken as a *locus classicus* of a truth-directed transcendental argument, as attempting to show that unless objects persisted independently of our perception of them, and unless this fact was known to us, we would be unable to have any kind of self-consciousness, as the former provides room for the is/seems distinction on which the latter is built.²⁶

Taken in this way, Strawson's objectivity argument has been subjected to the standard criticism, focusing on the fourth premise, where it is taken for granted that it is only possible for subjects to draw an is/seems distinction if their experience is (veridically) of a subject-independent world. The objection is that the need for such a distinction merely means our experience must enable us to apply

²⁴ Cf. *The Bounds of Sense*, 124.

²⁵ Ibid. 125-6.

²⁶ Cf. Karl Ameriks, 'Recent Work on Kant's Theoretical Philosophy', *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 19 (1982), 1-24, p. n: 'something must be said about the distinctive idea which, since at least [Strawson's] *The Bounds of Sense*, has widely been assumed to define what Kant was trying to do. The idea is that the transcendental deduction is to be read as a direct response to Humean skepticism and that, very roughly speaking, starting from a weak *premise* of something like the fact that we are conscious beings, Kant's main aim is to *establish* that there is an objective realm (what Strawson calls "the objectivity thesis").'

concepts of external things; but this does not show that such things exist, as we could apply such concepts even if all our experience were delusive, and nothing existed but appearances. This point is made clearly by Wilkerson:

On the one hand I must regard my experiences as mine, and on the other I must regard at least some of them as perceptions of external things. But consider the word 'regard'. It may be true that I must *apply* concepts of objects, that I must *regard* some of my experiences as perceptions of external things, that I must *believe* in the existence of tables and chairs. But it does not follow that I *successfully* or *correctly* apply such concepts, that I am *right* to regard some experiences as perceptions of external things, that my belief in the existence of the external world is *true*. Clearly there is a difference between applying a concept and successfully applying it. [Strawson's argument] shows at most that we must *suppose* that there is an external world, not that there *is* an external world.²⁷

This and similar objections to Strawson²⁸ therefore take the standard Stroudian form, of showing that, as it stands, the transcendental claim is too strong to be plausible, whilst, if it is weakened, it cannot be used to refute the epistemic sceptic.

Now, we have already seen that Strawson himself seems to have accepted that objections of this sort cannot be overturned directly and that he now holds that the only hope is to move to a naturalistic transcendental argument strategy, in which it is argued that belief in the existence of the external world forms an indispensable presupposition of our world-view, in a way that refutes sceptical doubt on this score by showing it to be futile.²⁹ However, we have already

²⁷ Wilkerson, *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, 57.

²⁸ Cf. Ralph C. S. Walker, *Kant* (London: Routledge, 1978), 117. Comparable criticisms have been made against variants on Strawson's argument: for example, see Anthony Brueckner, 'Another Failed Transcendental Argument', *Nous*, 23 (1989), 525-30, esp. p. 528, where he is replying to Morris Lipson, 'Objective Experience', *Nous*, 21 (1987), 319-43.

²⁹ In his revisionary interpretation of Strawson's arguments in *Individuals* and *The Bounds of Sense*, Grayling argues that this was Strawson's strategy even in these earlier works: see Grayling, *The Refutation of Scepticism*, 103-7. (Cf. also Eckart Förster, 'How Are Transcendental Arguments Possible?', in Eva Schaper and Wilhelm Vossenkuhl (eds.), *Reading Kant* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 3-20, pp. 16-17, where Förster takes a similar view of Strawson's outlook.) Strawson himself, however, seems to recognize that there was a shift in his position, brought about (in large part) by Stroud's critique of his previous anti-sceptical stance. (Although Strawson has not admitted in print that he changed his mind on this issue, he did so verbally when responding to questions from the audience at a conference on his work at the University of Reading, September 1999.)

seen why there is reason to be unhappy with this approach as a response to the sceptic.³⁰ Moreover, there is something deeply unsatisfactory in leaving this as the last word on the argument Kant himself provides. For, whatever the merits of anti-sceptical naturalism in itself, it seems clear that Kant's rationalism (in a broad sense) would have led him to resist this turn to Nature as a way out; indeed, whenever he discusses scepticism, he seems to emphasize that it must be taken seriously in just the way the naturalist denies, as raising a genuine normative issue.³¹ The question then arises, if one accepts that Kant's arguments in the *Transcendental Analytic* fail in a truth-directed form, as attempting to establish the existence of the external world on a priori grounds, but if one also accepts that Strawson's recent turn to neo-Humean naturalism is unsatisfactory, what role can be found for Kant's anti-sceptical argument to take? It is this question that we will now consider.

4.4 KANT'S REFUTATION OF IDEALISM

In offering a truth-directed transcendental argument against the epistemic sceptic concerning the external world, Strawson was clearly taking Kant's *Refutation of Idealism* as part (at least) of his inspiration; and, as we have seen, one result of Strawson's attentions has been to make commentators interpret the *Refutation* itself as such an argument, where some variation on the following sort of account is standard:

The argument starts, as always in the *Analytic of Principles*, from the assumption that the experience we are considering is at least temporally ordered. It really consists of two stages, of which only the second appears under the heading '*Refutation of Idealism*'; this rests upon and is a continuation of the argument of the *First Analogy*, which we must therefore look at to begin with. The *First Analogy* maintains that in all temporal experience one must be aware of something permanent, and the *Refutation of Idealism* adds that this permanent thing cannot be within me but must be an external object.

³⁰ See above, § 3.2.5.

³¹ Cf. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A377-8: 'The sceptical idealist... who ... challenges the ground of our assertion and denounces as insufficiently justified our conviction of the existence of matter, which we thought to base on immediate perception, is a benefactor of human reason in so far as he compels us, even in the smallest advances of ordinary experience, to keep on the watch, lest we consider as a well-earned possession what we perhaps obtain only illegitimately.'

So Kant reaches his conclusion that there must be independent objects by way of the much stronger contention that there must be some permanent objective thing—a ‘substance’ in the technical sense of the *Critique of Pure Reason*.³²

Here we have the Refutation as a truth-directed transcendental argument, forming part of what I have called a foundational transcendental argument strategy: its aim is to use a deductively valid argument to prove what the epistemic sceptic says is at best doubtful, beginning from a premise that the sceptic must accept (that I am conscious of my own existence as determined in time), and arguing via a number of transcendental claims to the certainty of a conclusion which cannot then be questioned. Taken in this way, the Refutation of Idealism has seemed to many to be a paradigm of what a transcendental argument must be.

However, when so taken, the Refutation has met with the standard objection raised against such truth-directed transcendental arguments, of which the following ‘textbook’ statement of the objection is typical:

Immanuel Kant’s famous ‘Refutation of Idealism’ argues that our conception of ourselves as mind-endowed beings presupposes material objects because we view our mind-endowed selves as existing in an objective temporal order, and such an order requires the existence of periodic physical processes (clocks, pendula, planetary regularities) for its establishment. At most, however, this argumentation succeeds in showing that such physical processes *have to be assumed by minds*, the issue of their actual mind-independent existence remaining unaddressed.³³

This criticism reiterates the familiar Stroudian weakening move, of arguing that the transcendental claim made by the Refutation as standardly interpreted is too strong: ‘consciousness of my existence as determined in time’ does not necessarily require the actual existence of persistent, mind-independent objects, but could come about as long as the existence of such objects is merely assumed; and once this weakening move is made, then of course we have not refuted

³² Walker, *Kant*, in.

³³ Nicholas Rescher, ‘Idealism’, in Jonathan Dancy and Ernest Sosa (eds.), *A Companion to Epistemology* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1992), 187–91, p. 190. Walker perhaps shows an awareness of this sort of criticism, and a desire to anticipate it, when he himself writes: ‘In the Refutation of Idealism Kant aims to prove that there must be objects, *or more exactly that one must apply the concept of an object within one’s experience*’ (Walker, *Kant*, no, my emphasis).

the sceptic who doubts the *reality* of such objects, not whether or not we believe in them.

As we have noted previously, this weakening move could then be challenged; but this is not the route I wish to explore here. Rather, I wish to take another direction, which can no doubt be anticipated from what has gone before. I will argue that Kant's target in the Refutation is not so much epistemic scepticism regarding the external world, as Hume's normativist justificatory scepticism, which treats the question of justification as the most pressing issue: what makes our belief in the existence of external things even legitimate or reasonable, much less certain or indubitable? The Humean position takes us to have experience of a kind that does not warrant us in believing that there are things outside the mind directly, whilst holding that an inference from the experience we do have to such things is unsound, as it inevitably lacks the necessary inductive support. Kant's response (I will claim) is to show that this characterization of experience is misconceived, in so far as it fails to recognize that experience involves an awareness as of objects in space outside us; belief in the existence of such things is therefore warranted by our perceptual norms in a way that is overlooked by the Humean, and which makes his subsequent treatment of inference and then imagination as sources for this belief redundant. My contention will be that Kant uses an experience-directed transcendental argument to establish his case, by claiming that, unless our perceptual experience had this kind of objectual character, self-consciousness would not be possible.³⁴ On this account, then, Kant is to be read as using a phenomenological transcendental argument strategy against Hume's normativist scepticism regarding our belief in the external world.

Now, from what has been suggested in the previous chapter, I hope it is clear that there are strong *prima-facie* advantages in adopting this reading of the Refutation. For, rather than having to *counter*

³⁴ Cf. Galen Strawson, 'Self, Body, and Experience', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, supp. vol. 73 (1999), 307-32, pp. 311-12, where Strawson also seems to propose a reading of the Refutation along these lines, saying that the thesis Kant aims to establish is not that 'one must have experience of body (or concrete non-mental being)' but that 'one must have experience that has the character of being experience of body (or concrete non-mental being)' because what Kant is arguing for 'isn't a metaphysically assertive thesis about what there must be in reality, in addition to experience of a certain sort, and about what experience must be experience of "relationally" speaking. It is, rather, a thesis about what sort of structure or character experience must have, considered without reference to its causes, if it is to be the experience of a self-conscious being.'

the Stroudian weakening move, we can now *accept* that the most the Refutation establishes is how the world *appears to us* to be in experience, so that it no longer needs to be read as a truth-directed transcendental argument, but can be understood as experience-directed instead. The price to be paid, of course, is that its target is no longer the epistemic sceptic, but the normativist justificatory sceptic; yet this, I have argued, is target enough to make the Refutation of genuine epistemological interest, in so far as Hume occupied just the latter position. Clearly, however, this approach is controversial and heterodox, and in order to defend it I will consider three questions. Is this a reasonable basis for understanding Kant's intentions in the relevant sections of the Transcendental Analytic, and particularly in the Refutation of Idealism? What, in more detail, is Kant's argument if read along these lines? And, if this reading is adopted, how successful is the argument when understood in this way?

On the first, largely interpretative question, the issues are notoriously complex. Strawson, as we have seen, took it as obvious that Kant's concerns were primarily Cartesian in nature, and many have agreed; at the other extreme, however, some have argued that Kant's interests were not anti-sceptical at all;³⁵ whilst in between, others have held that, though Kant was concerned to answer scepticism, it was not scepticism of the Cartesian kind.³⁶ As ever in Kant, this dispute can be related to architectonic matters: even if he may have been concerned with scepticism in some parts of the Analytic (for example, in the Refutation of Idealism), it could be argued that Strawson was wrong to read all these sections of the text as sharing a common purpose, when Kant's intentions may have been different elsewhere (for example, in the Transcendental Deduction). In order to avoid these complications, I will not attempt to claim that Kant's anti-sceptical argument extends throughout the Analytic, but will confine myself to the Refutation of Idealism.

Here, at least, it may appear that standard Strawsonian interpretation is on strong ground, where Kant explicitly presents his target as 'the *problematic* idealism of Descartes, which holds that

³⁵ Cf. Karl Ameriks, 'Kant's Transcendental Deduction as a Regressive Argument', *Kant-Studien*, 69 (1978), 273-87, and Stephen Engstrom, 'The Transcendental Deduction and Skepticism', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 32 (1994), 359-80.

³⁶ Cf. Margaret Wilson, 'Kant and the Refutation of Subjectivism', in Lewis White Beck (ed.), *Kant's Theory of Knowledge* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1974), 208-17, and Patricia Kitcher, 'Kant's Patchy Epistemology', *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, 68 (1987), 306-16.

there is only one empirical assertion that is indubitably certain, namely, that “I am”³⁷ It is natural to assume from this that Kant wishes to establish some sort of proof that the world we experience is existent independently of us, in a way that puts its reality beyond doubt; and Kant himself talks in these terms, about ‘proving the existence of objects’.³⁸ However, a wider understanding of Kant’s position immediately makes this assumption problematic: for, as it is commonly presented, one of the central and characteristic features of Kant’s epistemological position is that precisely this sort of certainty is unattainable, in so far as the world as it appears to us may not be how things are in themselves, beyond our experience of them. Of course, Kant did not think that this latter admission should lead to scepticism, conceived of as a counsel of despair: indeed, his great and distinctive contribution was to show how, even under these conditions of uncertainty, notions of truth, knowledge, reality, and so on could be retained, as nothing is *required* to be part of the absolute perspective to constitute an object of true judgement, knowledge, and objective inquiry. None the less, what is curious, from the point of view of Kant’s Refutation of Idealism, is that after Kant’s critical revolution these notions could not be retained in the old, pre-critical form that Descartes used to pose his sceptical question, and which the Refutation seems unquestioningly to accept in attempting to address it. Given this understanding of Kant’s broader picture, therefore, his comments about Descartes cannot be taken at face value.

One way of overcoming this tension is to give up the assumption that it is lack of certainty that troubles Kant about the sceptical position, and with it the assumption that in the Refutation of Idealism what he is after is some demonstrative argument that the external world exists, where the epistemological modesty of his own transcendental idealism suggests that no such demonstration can be given. Kant’s talk of proof and certainty of course leads one to expect a high level of ambitiousness, as does his talk of the Cartesian sceptic; but this talk is not unambiguous. Thus, in writing of the ‘scandal to philosophy’ posed by scepticism, what he emphasizes is not that our belief in the existence of things outside us could be mistaken,

³⁷ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B274.

³⁸ Ibid. B275. Cf. also B418: ‘For if the existence of outer things is not in any way required for determination of one’s own existence in time, the assumption of their existence is a quite gratuitous assumption, of which no proof can ever be given.’

but that belief in this existence ‘must be accepted merely on *faith* [*Glauben*]’-. that is, that it is a judgement we are not rationally entitled to make, even on *fallible* grounds, much less infallible ones.³⁹ And, when he does talk of the certainty of our belief in the existence of things outside us, it is not always clear whether he is arguing for certainty as such, or merely epistemic *parity* between inner and outer sense,⁴⁰ where once this is established it would be sufficient to establish certainty for the Cartesian, who treats the former as infallible; but this is an additional premise introduced *ad hominem*, *not* something itself established by the transcendental argument contained in the Refutation. Taken on its own, therefore, the Refutation is not self-evidently directed at epistemic scepticism and the question of certainty, but could instead be read as directed at the weaker target, of showing that our beliefs about the internal and external world are on the same epistemic footing, in so far as both have the same kind of cognitive ground, so that our beliefs about the outer world can be legitimated to the same degree as our beliefs about our inner states. Thus, while it is unsurprising that Kant makes reference to Descartes and talks about certainty and proof (because in the tradition that degree is taken to be correspondingly high), in fact this parity argument is more directly relevant to the justificatory sceptic like Hume, concerning how far our belief in the external world is even legitimate, much less whether it can be given an infeasible proof.⁴¹

³⁹ Cf. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A822/B850, where Kant says of belief (*Glauben*) as distinct from knowledge (*Wissen*): ‘If our holding of the judgment be only subjectively sufficient, and is at the same time taken as being objectively insufficient, we have what is termed *believing*. [But] when the holding of a thing to be true is sufficient both subjectively and objectively, it is *knowledge*.’ He earlier explains the distinction between subjective and objective he is using here as follows (A820/B848): ‘The holding of a thing to be true is an occurrence in our understanding which, though it may rest on objective grounds, also requires subjective causes in the mind of the individual who makes the judgment. If the judgment is valid for everyone, provided only that he is in possession of reason, its ground is objectively sufficient, and the holding of it to be true is entitled *conviction*. If it has its ground only in the special character of the subject, it is entitled *persuasion*.’

⁴⁰ Cf. Jonathan Vogel, ‘Kant’s “Refutation of Idealism” Reconsidered’, forthcoming, where Vogel speaks of the “Parity Doctrine”, according to which inner sense and outer sense are alike in their epistemic status: there is no greater impediment to knowledge of the external world than there is to knowledge of the self. If we are willing to admit that we have knowledge of one kind, then, presumably, we ought to admit that we have knowledge of the other kind.’

⁴¹ There is of course room here for scholarly debate about how far Kant could have had Humean scepticism in mind, given the extent of Kant’s knowledge of Hume’s

Doubts concerning this legitimacy arise, Kant argues, because the sceptic mistakenly holds that there is some sort of difference in the basis we have for beliefs about our inner states and about the external world, namely experience in the former case, and inference in the latter.⁴² It is this mistake Kant wishes to expose, by arguing that the inferential picture is incoherent, as, unless we had experience as of things outside us in space, we could not come to have the kind of awareness of our sensory states on which this inference is supposed to be founded. This does not show that how things are presented to us in experience is how things actually are, and thus that the external world has hereby been proved to exist in a way that will satisfy the infallibilist sceptic; but it does succeed in showing how ‘the game played by idealism [can be] turned against itself’,⁴³ by establishing that there is no epistemological difference between our beliefs about our inner states and our beliefs about things

ideas at the time, specifically his *Treatise*. Some years ago, Robert Wolff stated categorically that ‘Kant did *not* know the *Treatise*’, citing as evidence that ‘Kant nowhere manifests an awareness of the section in Hume’s *Treatise* “Of scepticism with regard to the senses” ’ (Robert P. Wolff, ‘Kant’s Debt to Hume via Beattie’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 21 (1960), 117-23, p. 123); but this, of course, rather begs the argument against my interpretation of the Refutation. More recently, Manfred Kuehn has pointed out that Kant at least knew J. G. Hamann’s translation of the Conclusion to book I, which appeared in the *Königsbergische Zeitung* in July 1771; and, given the contacts that existed between Hamann and Kant, Kant may well have discussed other aspects of the work with Hamann, together perhaps with Krauss (Kant’s colleague and former student), who knew it thoroughly (see Manfred Kuehn, ‘Kant’s Conception of “Hume’s Problem” ’, *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 21 (1983), 175-93, esp. pp. 185-6). Even if all Kant knew was from the section translated by Hamann, it seems to me that the following would have been sufficient to provide him with his target in the Refutation: ‘Without this quality, by which the mind enlivens some ideas beyond others (which seemingly is so trivial, and so little founded on reason) we cou’d never assent to any argument, nor carry our view beyond those few objects, that are present to our senses. Nay, even to these objects we cou’d never attribute any existence, but was dependent on the senses; and must comprehend them entirely in that succession of perceptions, which constitutes our self or person. Nay farther, even with relation to that succession, we cou’d only admit of those perceptions, which are immediately present to our consciousness, nor cou’d those lively images, with which memory presents us, be ever receiv’d as true pictures of past perceptions. The memory, senses, and understanding are, therefore, all of them founded on the imagination, or the vivacity of our ideas.

No wonder a principle so inconstant and fallacious shou’d lead us into errors, when implicitly follow’d (as it must be) in all its variations. ’Tis this principle, which makes us reason from causes and effects, and ’tis the same principle, which convinces us of the continu’d existence of external objects, when absent from the senses’ (Hume, *Treatise*, book I, part IV, § 7, pp. 265-6).

⁴² Cf. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B274-5: ‘Problematic idealism... pleads incapacity to prove, through immediate experience, any existence except our own.’

⁴³ Ibid. B276.

outside us:⁴⁴ it is in this sense that Kant offers a response to the justificatory sceptic who says our beliefs here are no more legitimate than those based on faith, by challenging the distinction he draws between the phenomenological content of inner and outer sense, in claiming that both relate to the content of our respective beliefs in an equally direct way.

Kant puts the sceptical case he is criticizing very clearly in the Fourth Paralogism, as it appears in the first edition of the *Critique*. This parallels the Refutation of Idealism (which only appears in the second edition) in the issues it addresses (though, as we shall see, it deals with them in a different manner, making greater play with the machinery of transcendental idealism). Kant states the Paralogism as follows:

That, the existence of which can only be inferred as a cause of given perceptions, has a merely doubtful existence.

Now all outer appearances are of such a nature that their existence is not immediately perceived, and that we can only infer them as the cause of given perceptions.

Therefore the existence of all objects of the outer senses is doubtful. This uncertainty I entitle the ideality of outer appearances, and the doctrine of this ideality is called *idealism*, as distinguished from the counter-assertion of a possible certainty in regard to objects of outer sense, which is called *dualism*.⁴⁵

He then states the sceptical position at greater length:

Let us first examine the premisses. We are justified, [it is argued], in maintaining that only what is in ourselves can be perceived immediately, and that my own existence is the sole object of a mere perception. The existence, therefore, of an actual object outside me (if this word 'me' be taken in the intellectual [not in the empirical] sense) is never given directly in perception. Perception is a modification of inner sense, and the existence of the outer object can be added to it only in thought, as being its outer cause, and accordingly as being inferred. For the same reason, Descartes was justified in limiting all perception, in the narrowest sense of that term, to the proposition, 'I, as a thinking being, exist'. Obviously, since what is without me is not in me, I cannot encounter it in apperception, nor therefore in any perception, which, properly regarded, is merely the determination of apperception.

⁴⁴ Cf. *ibid.* Bxli n. (my emphasis): 'The reality of outer sense is thus necessarily bound up with inner sense, if experience in general is to be possible at all; that is, I am yet *as certainly conscious* that there are things outside me, which are in relation to my sense, as I am conscious that I myself exist as determined in time.'

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* A366-7.

I am not, therefore, in a position to *perceive* external things, but can only infer their existence from my inner perception, taking the inner perception as the effect of which something external is the proximate cause. Now the inference from a given effect to a determinate cause is always uncertain, since the effect may be due to more than one cause. Accordingly, as regards the relation of the perception to its cause, it always remains doubtful whether the cause be internal or external; whether, that is to say, all the so-called outer perceptions are not a mere play of our inner sense, or whether they stand in relation to actual external objects as their cause. At all events, the existence of the latter is only inferred, and is open to all the dangers of inference, whereas the object of inner sense (I myself with all my representations) is immediately perceived, and its existence does not allow of being doubted.

The term '*idealist*' is not, therefore, to be understood as applying to those who deny the existence of external objects of the senses, but only to those who do not admit that their existence is known through immediate perception, and who therefore conclude that we can never, by way of any possible experience, be completely certain as to their reality.⁴⁶

As we have observed, Kant emphasizes the way in which the sceptic assumes that there is an asymmetry between our beliefs about our mental states, as supported through some sort of immediate perception, and our beliefs about the external world, as based on some sort of inference, whereby the latter is then treated as intrinsically less certain than the former, or even (as he later remarks) illegitimate.⁴⁷

The difference, as I see it, between Kant's response to the sceptic in the Fourth Paralogism and in the Refutation of Idealism is this: whereas in the former he attacks the supposed asymmetry on ontological grounds, claiming that both inner and outer objects should be treated as representations from the transcendental perspective, in the latter he attacks it on phenomenological grounds, claiming that outer objects are as much given in experience as inner ones.⁴⁸ Thus, in the Fourth Paralogism, he gets to the symmetry claim using

⁴⁶ *Critique of Pure Reason*, A367-9.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* A378.

⁴⁸ My position therefore differs from those commentators who have argued that Kant's objectives change between the first and second editions, claiming that the Refutation of Idealism is supposed to do more than address the asymmetry claim that forms the focus of the Fourth Paralogism. For this view, see e.g. W. H. Walsh, *Kant's Criticism of Metaphysics* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1975), 194: 'In the first edition Kant tried to show that we have as much reason to claim to have knowledge of bodies as we have reason to claim knowledge of minds. In the second edition he argued that we could not have knowledge of minds unless we also had knowledge of bodies.' However, to accept this sort of account is to reject Kant's own observation that the change between the first and second editions was one 'altering the method of proof only' (*Critique of Pure Reason*, Bx1 n.).

transcendental idealism as a premise, arguing that it is one of the advantages of this idealism that it thereby enables the distinction between inner and outer objects to be collapsed at the transcendental level, thereby breaking down the asymmetry on which the sceptic relies.⁴⁹ In the Refutation of Idealism, he makes no use of transcendental idealism conceived of as a metaphysical doctrine in this way, and instead merely bases his argument on the transcendental claim that ‘our inner experience ... is possible only on the assumption of outer experience’;⁵⁰ beliefs about objects therefore cannot be products of inference from the former, in so far as prior awareness as of such objects is required to make such inner experience possible:

Idealism assumed that the only immediate experience is inner experience, and that from it we can only *infer* outer things—and this, moreover, only in an untrustworthy manner, as in all cases when we are inferring from given effects to determinate causes. In this particular case, the cause of the representations, which we ascribe, perhaps falsely, to outer things, may lie in ourselves. But in the above proof it has been shown that outer experience is really immediate, and that only by means of it is inner experience—not indeed the consciousness of my own existence, but the determination of it in time—possible.⁵¹

In the Refutation of Idealism, therefore, Kant sets out to break the sceptic’s asymmetry claim, by showing that our judgements regarding outer objects must be no less immediate than those regarding inner ones, in so far as experience as of such objects is required to make the latter possible, so that both these types of judgement fall under the same doxastic norm, making them equally certain (if one is an infallibilist about inner sense), or equally legitimate (if, like Kant, one is not).

Kant gives the following argument for this claim, which I will break down into stages, and provisionally interpret:

⁴⁹ Cf. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A371-2 and A378-9.

⁵⁰ Ibid. B275. For a recent expression of the contrary view, cf. Sebastian Gardner, *Kant and the Critique of Pure Reason*, 186: ‘transcendental idealism is built into the Refutation . . . [and] without transcendental idealism, the Refutation has little force against the sceptic’, where here transcendental idealism is glossed as the doctrine that ‘the existence of X can be inferred from the necessity of our representing X, because X is something whose very existence is a function of such necessities’. On this view, as Gardner notes, ‘the Refutation is continuous with the Fourth Paralogism’ (p. 187), not only in its objectives (which I accept) but also in its background assumption of idealism (which I do not).

⁵¹ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B276-7.

- (i) I am conscious of my own existence as determined in time.

That is, the sensory or mental states that I am aware of in inner sense appear to come in some sort of temporal sequence (e.g. a bang, followed by a whistle, followed by a bang; or a sensation of heat, followed by one of cold, followed by one of heat; or a thought about cake followed by a desire for food).

- (2) All determination of time presupposes something *permanent* in perception.

This premise refers back to the First Analogy,⁵² where Kant argued that if a subject experienced a world as purely successive, with no permanence underlying alteration in things, then the subject would lose all sense of a unified time order, and thus of anything following anything else in time. Thus, if there were no permanent that appeared to persist whilst I was having my experiences in inner sense, then the objects of those experiences would not appear to follow one another in a single temporal sequence.⁵³

- (3) But this permanent cannot be something in me, since it is only through this permanent that my existence in time can itself be determined.

That is, within inner sense, it is not possible to treat the persisting self as providing an underlying substratum, through which these sensory or mental states could then be treated as changing attributes of a persisting subject. For (as Kant puts it in the first-edition Deduction) ‘no fixed and abiding self can present itself in this flux of inner appearances’:⁵⁴ far from being given in experience, it is only once I have already come to see that mental states have a certain sort of temporal relation that the concept of a persisting self can be constructed, and not the other way round.⁵⁵

⁵² *Critique of Pure Reason*, A182-9/8224-32.

⁵³ Cf. *ibid.* A188/B231-2: ‘Substances, in the [field of] appearance, are the substrata of all determinations of time. If some of these substances could come into being and others cease to be, the one condition of the empirical unity of time would be removed. The appearances would then relate to two different times, and existence would flow in two parallel streams—which is absurd. There is only one time in which all different times must be located, not as coexistent but as in succession to one another.’

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* A107.

⁵⁵ Cf. *ibid.* B278: ‘The consciousness of myself in the representation “I” is not an intuition, but a merely *intellectual* representation of the spontaneity of a thinking subject. This “I” has not, therefore, the least predicate of intuition, which, as permanent, might serve as correlate for the determination of time in inner sense—in the manner in which, for instance, *impenetrability* serves in our *empirical* intuition of matter.’

- (4) Thus perception of this permanent is possible only through a *thing* outside me and not through the mere *representation* of a thing outside me; and consequently the determination of my existence in time is possible only through the existence of actual things which I perceive outside me.⁵⁶

That is, I could never be conscious of my own existence as determined in time, if I had to infer the existence of objects in space from a prior awareness of my inner states and their temporal relation to one another, as those states lack the kind of permanence required to make such awareness possible: my experience must therefore enable me to make judgements about the external world directly, without having to go via any judgements about my inner states. It then follows that experience cannot merely involve some initial awareness of the perceiver's sensory states (the feeling of heat, the sensation of yellow) which the subject must then inspect as images or representations, to tell him what the world is like that has caused these images or representations; for then the phenomenological distinction between inner and outer sense would be lost, and with it the capacity of the latter to provide us with the sort of consciousness required for a unified conception of time-determination.⁵⁷

- (5) Now consciousness [of my existence] in time is necessarily bound up with consciousness of the [condition of the] possibility of this time-determination; and it is therefore necessarily bound up with the existence of things outside me, as the condition of this time-determination. In other words, the consciousness of my existence is at the same time an immediate consciousness of the existence of other things outside me.

⁵⁶ Cf. Immanuel Kant, *Reflexionen zur Metaphysik*, R5653, xviii. 307 (where the first number is that assigned to the 'Reflexionen' in the Akademie edition of *Kant's gesammelte Schriften*, the second is the Akademie volume number, and the third is the page number; where available, I have followed translations provided by Guyer in his *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge*): 'For in space alone do we posit that which endures, in time there is unceasing change. Now, however, the determination of the existence of a thing in time, that is in such a change, is impossible unless its intuition is connected to that which endures. This must therefore be intuited outside us as the object of outer sense.'

⁵⁷ Cf. Kant, *Reflexionen*, R5653, xviii. 309: 'It comes to this, that I can become conscious of myself in an external relation through a special sense, which is, however, requisite for the determination of inner sense. Space proves to be a representation which cannot be related to the subject (as object), for otherwise it would be a representation of time. That it is not, but is rather immediately *related* as existing to something distinct from the subject, that [is] the consciousness of the object as a thing outside me.'

That is, consciousness of anything as an 'inner' state has turned out to be dependent on the capacity of outer sense to present things to us as existing in space outside us. Thus, as Kant puts it in the 'General Note on the System of Principles' which follows the Refutation, he has shown us the limits of the possibility of '*self-knowledge* by mere inner consciousness . . . without the aid of outer empirical intuitions'.⁵⁸ The sceptic is therefore wrong to claim that our judgements about how things are in the external world must always be based on some sort of inference from the sensory states of the subject, in so far as these are given in inner sense; on the contrary, Kant has shown how the necessary contribution of outer sense requires some such judgements to be non-inferential, based on perceptual experience. This, then, is how the game played by idealism has been played against itself: perceptual beliefs about the external world are shown to be non-inferential and hence no more open to sceptical doubt than beliefs about our inner states, in so far as both are equally direct; and this demonstration rests on the transcendental claim that the kind of self-consciousness which the sceptic takes as a starting-point would not be possible unless this were so.⁵⁹

Now, many have criticized Kant's Refutation, whilst others may feel that the account I have given of it does not do justice to Kant's intentions. I will first consider whether this account avoids the common criticisms, and then I will defend it as an interpretation, hoping that if the outcome of the former investigation is positive, familiar hermeneutic considerations of charity may help me in the latter task.

Perhaps the most common objection to Kant's Refutation is that, whilst it may show why we must have perceptual experience as of external things, it does not show that this experience has to be

⁵⁸ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B293-4.

⁵⁹ Cf. Hubert Schwyzer, 'Subjectivity in Descartes and Kant', *Philosophical Quarterly*, 47 (1997), 342-57, P- 352: 'Kant's answer to our present question (what makes it clear and intelligible to us that this is a situation for [an experiencing subject]?) is not in the end a recondite one. It is because, and only because, the subject sees *that there is a cheese in front of him* that he can say, reflectively, "I'm seeing cheese". And that means that he forms the thought, makes the judgement, *that* there is cheese here. The for-me factor is possible not because one is conscious of oneself, but because one can make judgements about objects. And to do that is to conceive them under categories, to see them as substances, causes, totalities etc. If one could not do that, one would lack the for-me factor.'

veridical, and that there *are* such things.⁶⁰ One way of responding to this objection, which Kant himself seems to adopt when he presents the argument in the first edition of the *Critique* in the Fourth Paralogism, is to move towards some kind of phenomenalism, whereby the gap between how things appear to us and how things are is closed, at least when this distinction is treated transcendently. This move, however, then appears to have the unsatisfactory result that (as Stroud puts it) ‘the refutation of idealism can succeed only if idealism is true. The things we perceive can be shown to be spatial things and to exist independently of us only if they are all appearances and are not independent of us.’⁶¹ It then requires considerable ingenuity to resolve this apparent paradox; so much so, that many have given up the Kantian project in despair. However, if we take Kant’s argument in the manner I have suggested, as attempting to show how perceptual experience can give us good grounds for believing in the external world by refuting Hume’s claim that ‘sight informs us not of distance or outness . . . immediately’, then no such move is required: for, all that is hereby claimed is that outer sense *presents us* with ‘something real in space’, not that, in basing that belief on experience of this sort, we can be certain that this world as we perceive it exists. Of course, if Kant wanted to answer the ‘scandal to philosophy’ by providing a demonstrative proof of the existence of the external world, then admittedly on this reading he falls short; but, as we have already mentioned, if instead he just wanted to show that our belief is not ‘accepted merely on *faith*’, then my account will suffice, in demonstrating that no such irrational leap is required, in so far as it is just such a world that we perceive, making our belief in objects outside us thoroughly justified.

However, even if it is accepted that Kant’s conclusion is enough for what he wants the argument to achieve, criticisms have been offered of some of the premises themselves, which we must now look at in more detail. Of these premises, the first seems uncontentious enough, so that it is the remaining three that we must consider.

In the various criticisms that have been offered of the second premise, and the First Analogy on which it is based, many do not

⁶⁰ Cf. Wilson, ‘Kant and the Refutation of Subjectivism’, esp. pp. 212–13. Like me, Wilson argues that considerations of charity should incline us to see Hume, rather than Descartes, as Kant’s principal target in the Refutation.

⁶¹ Stroud, *The Significance of Philosophical Scepticism*, 149.

relate to the argument as I have interpreted it. Thus, some commentators have taken Kant to be claiming that the *measurement* of time requires more than the awareness of succession; to which the response has been that this is not so, as regular succession would make this possible.⁶² As I understand it, however, this is not the real point at issue: rather, Kant wishes to examine how it is we can have a conception of a unitary time-order. But it may then be objected that even in relation to the issue of unitariness, Kant's claim in the First Analogy that 'in all change of appearances substance is permanent'⁶³ is too strong, as such unitariness would be possible provided things overlapped as they appeared to go in and out of existence.⁶⁴ I have no quarrel with this objection in relation to the First Analogy. But it is important to notice that in the context of the Refutation of Idealism the dialectical situation is different: for here (in premise 2) Kant defends the view that, for states to appear to follow one another in this way, my experience of those states cannot be merely successive, when all I feel is one state starting and another stopping, with no continuity between them, as then the subject would lose all sense of a unified time-order, and thus of anything following anything else in time. Thus, if there were nothing that appeared to persist whilst these states altered, then they could not appear to follow one another in a single temporal sequence.

This response, however, may serve only to introduce a central objection to the fourth premise, which is to deny the picture of inner sense as merely successive on which Kant here relies. I will leave aside Kant's claim that experience of the self cannot be used to provide some sort of continuity within inner sense, as this rests on a view of what is given in introspection that is endorsed by Hume himself,⁶⁵ and which Kant is therefore entitled to take for granted in this context. Ralph Walker provides two more relevant counter-instances to Kant's claim that in inner sense alone we cannot intuit anything that appears permanent, when he argues that 'I might have some feeling, like a headache, to which I ascribe permanence even though I was not always conscious of it, e.g. because asleep or otherwise absorbed, [or] I might be continuously aware throughout my

⁶² Cf. Walker, *Kant*, m-12.

⁶³ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A182/B224.

⁶⁴ Cf. Walker, *Kant*, 112.

⁶⁵ Cf. Hume, *Treatise*, book I, part IV, § 6, p. 252. For Kant's knowledge of this aspect of Hume's position, see Kitcher, *Kant's Transcendental Psychology*, 97-102.

existence of some permanent inner representation, like a steady hum.⁶⁶ I take the force of these examples to be as follows: in the headache case, while it is admitted that our experience in inner sense is discontinuous, it is suggested that in relation to inner sense, no less than outer sense, we can judge that some state has persisted unperceived, so that even if my experience of that state is not constant, we can take something to persist while our experience changes on the basis of inner sense alone, without having anything resembling outer sense. In the hum case, by contrast, Walker appears to be challenging Kant's claim about the phenomenology of inner sense itself, arguing that it could contain persistent experiences that 'overlap' others, providing a constant backdrop for the ongoing succession that Kant identifies.

Now, as Walker recognizes, the difficulty with his first (headache) case is that it involves a kind of realism about mental states that some would question immediately: namely, the view that mental states can exist 'unperceived'. It is certainly true that many of Kant's opponents would be disquieted by this suggestion, as their case for an epistemological contrast between inner and outer sense rests on a denial of this possibility in the former case, and an acceptance of it in the latter.⁶⁷ Even leaving aside this dialectical difficulty, however, Walker might be challenged in another way: namely, that it is only by having experience of things in space first that we can come to conceive of how anything like a headache might exist unperceived; for it is only through the experience of the former that things appear perceptually cut off from us by other things, as a result of which such realist conceptions can arise at all. If such realism about inner sense is parasitic on the spatial nature of outer sense, therefore, Kant's claims about the priority of the latter still hold good.

On Walker's second counter-instance of the persisting hum, it is not argued that we could conceptualize the states of inner sense as we do those of outer sense, but rather that some of these states might be persistent enough in themselves to provide a continuity to experience without recourse to outer sense: thus, it is argued, the transition

⁶⁶ Walker, *Kant*, 113.

⁶⁷ For a discussion of Hume's position on this issue, see John W. Cook, 'Hume's Scepticism with Regard to the Senses', *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 5 (1968), 1-17, where Cook concludes that 'Hume thought of it as a contradiction to suppose that a pain might continue to exist when no longer felt' (p. 4).

from feeling hot to feeling cold might appear continuous to me, in so far as both are accompanied by the same sound, as a (relatively) permanent (unchanging) 'backdrop'.⁶⁸ Now, it is of course no essential part of our auditory experience that it contains qualitative diversity, so there is nothing conceptually problematic about the idea of a qualitatively identical hum of this sort; the difficulty, however, is over its *numerical* identity, and whether the hum could be conceived of as a continuous particular, if it did not appear to have any sort of spatial location (as 'coming from over there'). Without this apparent spatial location, it has been argued, any such sound would not be conceivable as something that could exist beyond our perception of it, and thus as re-identifiable, in a way that is required if it is to have particularity ascribed to it; and without that, it is hard to see how we could experience the hum as the same or unchanging, in the right way.⁶⁹

If this settles some of the philosophical concerns about Kant's argument and shows how my account of that argument can deal with them, there are still interpretative issues to be considered. In particular, it might be felt that in attempting to duck the first objection by claiming that Kant was not trying to address the epistemic sceptic, I have been too modest in stating his objectives.⁷⁰ It must be admitted that parts of the text are most straightforwardly read as attempting to prove that perceptual experience is of things as they actually are, so that Kant's ambitions may be taken to point in this direction. However, it may be that Kant's anti-sceptical rhetoric in

⁶⁸ Cf. Henry E. Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983), 201-3, where Allison labels Kant's insistence on such a background continuity 'the backdrop thesis'.

⁶⁹ Cf. Strawson, *Individuals*, 74: 'We have already seen that the idea of a place, and with it that of a spatial system of objects, cannot be given a meaning in purely auditory terms. Yet it seems we must have a dimension other than the temporal in which to house the at present unheard sensory particulars, if we are to give a satisfactory sense to the idea of their existing now unperceived, and hence to the idea of reidentification of particulars in a purely auditory world and hence, perhaps, to the idea of a non-solipsistic consciousness in a purely auditory world.'

⁷⁰ Cf. Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, 300; 'It certainly follows from this [that experience of permanence can only come through outer sense] that the capacity to represent such objects is a necessary condition of the possibility of determining my existence in time. But if he is to refute the Cartesian skeptic, Kant cannot rest content with this rather modest conclusion.' Cf. also Stroud, 'Transcendental Arguments', 256: 'For Kant, a transcendental argument is supposed to answer the question of "justification", and in so doing it demonstrates the "objective validity" of certain concepts. I have taken this to mean that the concept "X" has objective validity only if there are Xs and that demonstrating the objective validity of the concept is tantamount to demonstrating that Xs actually exist'.

the Refutation is a hangover from the Fourth Paralogism, where (as we have seen) he used the machinery of transcendental idealism as a way of completing this task; but it is striking that no such machinery is used here, nor is anything else put in its place, which means either he now failed to see a gap which he had earlier tried to bridge, or he no longer had the epistemic sceptic as his real target. I believe the latter: that what Kant recognized by the time of the second edition was that transcendental idealism is primarily an *epistemological* doctrine, which makes no attempt to counter the sceptical suggestion that we cannot be certain that how things appear to us and hence how we believe things to be correspond to how things actually are. Seen in this light, it is clear that Kant really has no quarrel with the epistemic sceptic; instead, where the real issue lies is over the conception of experience which the Cartesian model of the mind and the world has led to, in the more radical sceptical empiricism of Hume.⁷¹

It can also be seen, I think, that my approach helps to resolve a notorious interpretative difficulty with the Refutation of Idealism: namely, whether the conclusion of Kant's argument contradicts his claims elsewhere, that objects in space and time are not things in themselves (or transcendently real), but mere appearances (or transcendently ideal).⁷² There are two standard, but rather

⁷¹ It is arguable that the seeds of Hume's scepticism are sown in the following passage from Descartes's Second Meditation, which on my reading of the Refutation provides a better focus for Kant's critique than the issue of certainty and proof: 'We say that we see the wax itself, if it is there before us, not that we judge it to be there from its colour or shape; and this might lead me to conclude without more ado that knowledge of the wax comes from what the eyes see, and not from the scrutiny of the mind alone. But then if I look out of the window and see men crossing the square, as I just happen to have done, I normally say that I see the men themselves, just as I say that I see the wax. Yet do I see any more than hats and coats which could conceal automatons? I *judge* that they are men. And so something which I thought I was seeing with my eyes is in fact grasped solely by the faculty of judgement which is in my mind' (Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, 21).

⁷² Cf. Eckart Förster, 'Kant's Refutation of Idealism', in A. J. Holland (ed.), *Philosophy: Its History and Historiography* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1985), 287-303, pp. 294-5, who puts the prima-facie difficulty as follows: 'But now it looks as though the argument [of the Refutation] is perhaps too potent to be handled easily by Kant. For if, as he argues, the determination of my existence in time "is possible only through a *thing* outside me and not through the mere *representation* of a thing outside me", then this refutes Cartesian idealism. But it equally seems to refute Kant's own transcendental idealism "that what we call outer objects are nothing but *mere representations* of our sensibility" (A30/B45, my italics [i.e. Förster's]). In other words: either the Refutation of Idealism is also a refutation of transcendental idealism, or it does not *refute idealism* at all.'

unattractive responses to this difficulty.⁷³ One is to say that although the Refutation proves that objects in space are objectively real or mind-independent in *some* sense, it does not establish that this independence is of a kind which Kant attributes to things-in-themselves, hence his continued talk of them as appearances (as not transcendently real); the other is to say that the Refutation does show that the external world consists in full-blown mind-independent objects, and that here Kant has simply adopted a position at odds with his views expressed elsewhere, that these objects are not things-in-themselves (that they are transcendently ideal). The trouble with the first response is that on this characterization of idealism, the Refutation appears to be a rather half-hearted response to it; whilst the problem with the second is that it attributes to Kant a troubling degree of inconsistency, in placing this part of the *Critique* at a different end of the philosophical spectrum from other parts, on issues regarding the ontological status of the external world. The initial difficulty only arises, however, because the contrast between idealism and realism here is taken in an ontological manner, concerning whether or not objects are mind-independent. On my reading, however, the idealism/realism contrast is primarily epistemological in character, where the idealist comes to question our beliefs about the world on the basis that they are insufficiently justified by experience,⁷⁴ whilst the realist claims they can be given such grounds: so in this sense Kant can consistently be a realist about empirical objects in space and time, whilst being an idealist about things-in-themselves, defined as beyond experience in precisely this way, where the issue does not concern questions of mind-independence at all. The Refutation can thus still be understood as fully anti-idealistic in this sense, regarding the basis of our beliefs about empirical objects, whilst this way of taking the idealism/realism contrast also makes it possible to see how Kant could both defend empirical realism in the Refutation (holding that objects in space are part of the intentional content of our experience) and call them appearances (where appearances are characterized as being

⁷³ For a brief overview of where these sorts of responses are to be found in the literature, with references, see Erling Skorpen, 'Kant's Refutation of Idealism', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 6 (1968), 23-34, P- 23.

⁷⁴ Cf. Kant's characterization of idealism in the passage at B276-7 cited above, and *Reflexionen*, R5709, xviii. 332: 'Idealism is the opinion that we immediately experience only our own existence, but can only infer that of outer objects (which inference from effect to cause is in fact uncertain).'

experienceable), whilst equally defending transcendental idealism elsewhere (holding that the world outside space and time is *not* part of the intentional content of our experience), and hence could talk about things-in-themselves (as what is *un*experienceable in this way).⁷⁵

A further, more general, interpretative concern might be that my reading of Kant is (ironically) too *empiricist*, in seeking to find a basis for our beliefs in experience, as if this were somehow a more privileged and immediate source of information about reality than any other, where Kant's great contribution was to show how this sort of immediacy with regard to the senses is a myth.⁷⁶ This is to misunderstand the claim I have been making, however. The *only* sense in which I have suggested that Kant took judgements of outer sense to be immediate is that these judgements are not inferential, not based on some sort of causal or best explanation inference *from* what I see *to* what is in the world, given that (Kant claims) what I see appears to be outside me and thus in that world already. I take it that Kant's position here is compatible with experience not being immediate in another sense: namely, that what is given in experience is mediated by our concepts, beliefs, or language. Thus I would of course accept that, when Kant talks about experience, he holds that the nature of that experience is (to use Galen Strawson's term) 'concept-assisted',⁷⁷ by being constitutively informed by the concepts we bring to it: indeed, it is precisely because he views experience as shaped in this way, that he takes it to have the sort of phenomenological content required to make our judgements here direct (non-inferential). Nor do I make the related error of assuming that Kant sought to ground these judgements in experience because he was wedded to some sort of foundationalist project: rather, as I hope to have shown, his appeal to experience is simply a way of providing these beliefs with a justification Hume said they could not have, not to answer any demand for infallibility in response to epistemic scepticism.

⁷⁵ Cf. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B307: 'The object of sensibility is likewise the doctrine of the noumenon in the negative sense, that is, of things which the understanding must think without this reference to our mode of intuition, therefore not merely as appearances but as things in themselves.'

⁷⁶ Cf. Paul Guyer, 'Kant's Intentions in the Refutation of Idealism', *Philosophical Review*, 92 (1983), 329-83, p. 383: 'it was also correct for Kant at least to suggest that knowledge that extended objects exist might not usefully be described as immediate. For such a description could be taken to mean that such knowledge is simply given in intuition, when in fact intuition by itself yields no knowledge of anything.'

⁷⁷ Galen Strawson, *The Secret Connexion*, 2nd edn. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 239.

It therefore appears that both philosophically and interpretatively there is no insuperable objection to taking Kant's Refutation as an experience-directed transcendental argument, successfully directed against normativist scepticism regarding our belief in the existence of the external world.

Finally, and briefly, let me return to Strawson. In the previous section, I criticized Strawson's objectivity argument, and his later attempt to move to a naturalistic strategy, as a way of responding to the epistemic sceptic. I think, however, that much of what I have said about Kant's viewpoint and its target here can also be found in Strawson, where he clearly focuses on the contrast between Kant's position and Hume's, as in the following passages:

[It] is quite inappropriate to represent the general, realist view of the world which is reflected in our ordinary perceptual judgements as having the status of a *theory* with respect to sensible experience;... it is inappropriate to represent that experience as supplying the *data* for such a theory or the *evidence* on which it is based or from which it is *inferred* or *inferable*,... it is inappropriate to speak of our ordinary perceptual judgements as having the character of an *interpretation*, in the light of theory, of the content of our sensible experience. The reason for this is simple. In order for some belief or set of beliefs to be correctly described as a theory in respect of certain data, it must be possible to describe the data on the basis of which the theory is held in terms which do not presuppose the acceptance of the theory on the part of those for whom the data *are* data. But this is just the condition we have seen not to be satisfied in the case where the so-called data are the contents of sensible experience and the so-called theory is a general realist view of the world. The 'data' are laden with the 'theory'. Sensible experience is permeated by concepts unreflective acceptance of the general applicability of which is a condition of its being so permeated, a condition of that experience being what it is; and these concepts are of realistically conceived objects...

This concludes the first stage of my argument. I have argued that mature sensible experience (in general) presents itself as, in Kantian phrase, an *immediate* consciousness of the existence of things outside us. (*Immediate*, of course, does not mean *infallible*.) Hence, the common realist conception of the world does not have the character of a 'theory' in relation to the 'data of sense'. I have not claimed that this fact is of itself sufficient to 'refute' scepticism or to provide a philosophical 'demonstration' of the truth of some form of realism; though I think it does provide the right starting point for reflection on these enterprises. But that is another story and one I shall not try to tell here. My point so far is that the ordinary human commitment to a conceptual scheme of realist character is not properly described, even in a stretched

sense of the words, as a theoretical commitment. It is, rather, something given with the given.⁷⁸

Here Strawson is reacting critically to Ayer's latter-day Humean claim, that (as Strawson puts it) 'our normal perceptual judgements always "go beyond" the sensible experience which gives rise to them; for these judgements carry implications which would not be carried by any "strict account" of that experience'.⁷⁹ Strawson's response is not like Kant's, in that he does not try to provide any

⁷⁸ Strawson, 'Perception and its Objects', in G. F. Macdonald (ed.), *Perception and Identity* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1979), 41-60, pp. 44-5, 47. Cf. also Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense*, 18-19: 'The central problem of classical empiricism was set by the assumption that experience really offers us nothing but separation and fleeting sense-impressions, images and feelings; and the problem was to show how, on this exiguous basis, we could supply a rational justification of our ordinary picture of the world as containing continuously and independently existing and interacting material things and persons . . . Kant rejected the basic empiricist dogma which Hume never questioned . . . His rejection took the form . . . of a proof that the minimal empiricist conception of experience was incoherent in isolation, and that it only made sense within a larger framework which necessarily included the use and application in experience of concepts of an objective world.' This Strawsonian reading of Kant's position has been put forward more recently by John McDowell: 'Consider Kant's advance over Hume. Hume inherits from his predecessors a conception according to which no experience is in its very nature, intrinsically, an encounter with objects. What Kant takes from Hume is that there is no rationally satisfactory route from such a predicament to the epistemic position that we are in (obviously in, we might say). Transcendental synthesis (or whatever) is not supposed to be such a route: the whole point of its being transcendental, in this context, is that it is not supposed to be something that we, our familiar empirical selves, go in for. It would be a mistake to think we can domesticate Kant's point by detranscendentalizing the idea of synthesis, so as to suggest that the idea of encountering objects is put in place by interpretation of data, perhaps by inference to the best explanation, with the interpretation being something we do, or at least something that might figure in a "rational reconstruction" of our being in the epistemic position we are in. That would just be missing Hume's point. Kant does not miss Hume's point. He builds on it: since there is no rationally satisfactory route from experiences, conceived as, in general, less than encounters with objects, glimpses of objective reality, to the epistemic position we are manifestly in, experiences must be intrinsically encounters with objects. But how could they be that if their aetiology were phenomenologically extrinsic?' (John McDowell, 'The Content of Perceptual Experience', *Philosophical Quarterly*, 44 (1994), 190-205, pp. 192-3).

⁷⁹ Strawson, 'Perception and its Objects', 41. For a clear presentation of Ayer's position, cf. 'Has Austin Refuted the Sense-Datum Theory?', in his *Metaphysics and Common Sense* (London: Macmillan, 1967), 126-48, esp. pp. 128-35. Cf. also H. H. Price, 'The Permanent Significance of Hume's Philosophy', *Philosophy*, 15 (1940), 7-37, p. 14: 'Thus in both cases—necessary-connection propositions and material-object propositions—we have what may be called a transcendence of the given. We are not just asserting that such-and-such impressions are or have been sensed. We are extrapolating beyond them.'

argument against this claim, but just engages in the purely phenomenological exercise, of reminding us what our experience is actually like.⁸⁰ None the less, I take it that he would find the argument worth making and its conclusion congenial, so that my attempt to defend transcendental arguments as used in this way should not be taken to be so greatly at odds with Strawson's overall position as it might at first appear: rather, it seems to me a route he could have taken for himself, independently of and perhaps in preference to his later turn towards naturalism.

4.5 HEGEL ON PERCEPTION

In the previous section, we saw how Kant's Refutation of Idealism might be read as a response to the normativist justificatory sceptic, who questions our right to our beliefs concerning the external world, where this response rested on showing the sceptic that experience is rich enough to justify those beliefs, in accordance with our perceptual norm. In this section, I wish to offer an account of Hegel's opening arguments in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* along similar lines.

In offering such an account, my first problem is interpretative. For even if it is granted that there is a role for transcendental arguments within Hegel's position,⁸¹ it might be felt that the difficulties I face

⁸⁰ Strawson, 'Perception and its Objects', 43-7. Paul Snowdon has helpfully labelled Strawson's position here 'the Descriptive Thesis', which Snowdon characterizes as follows: 'the assertion that a proper description of our perceptual experiences must employ physical object concepts, that there is no totally adequate description of experiences in neutral terms' (Paul Snowdon, 'How to Interpret "Direct Perception"', in Tim Crane (ed.), *The Contents of Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 48-78, p. 61).

⁸¹ Interpretations of Hegel that find a role for transcendental arguments can be found in the following: Charles Taylor, 'The Opening Arguments of the *Phenomenology*', in Alasdair MacIntyre (ed.), *Hegel* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976), 151-88; Terry Pinkard, 'Hegel's Idealism and Hegel's Logic', *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung*, 33 (1979), 210-26; Frederick Neuhouser, 'Deducing Desire and Recognition in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 24 (1986), 243-62; Kenneth R. Westphal, *Hegel's Epistemological Realism* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1989); and Robert B. Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism: The Satisfactions of Self-Consciousness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). For dissenting voices, see Robert C. Solomon, *In the Spirit of Hegel: A Study of G. W. F. Hegel's 'Phenomenology of Spirit'* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 350-7, and Michael N. Forster, *Hegel's Idea of a 'Phenomenology of Spirit'* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 161-3. Some of the issues raised in this section are also discussed in my 'Hegel, Scepticism and

here in offering a 'modest' reading of Hegel's anti-sceptical outlook are even greater than those I faced in the previous section in relation to Kant: for it could be said that, whilst Kant may have had some degree of epistemological modesty, there is no room to think of Hegel (with his claims to 'absolute knowledge') in this way, so that his target can hardly be the merely justificatory sceptic, in the manner I want to suggest. So it may be objected that *if* Hegel did use transcendental arguments at the beginning of the *Phenomenology*, they could *only* be truth-directed ones.

Now, in point of fact, I think there are truth-directed transcendental arguments to be found in Hegel, particularly in the *Logic*, but these will not concern us here (principally because I do not think they are meant to be anti-sceptical in intent); and I would agree that there is a sense in which Hegel was more sanguine about scepticism than Kant (indeed, Hegel himself often presented this as a central difference between his outlook and that of his predecessor). None the less, it is consistent with this to hold that Hegel's sceptical target at this point in his system (i.e. at the beginning of the *Phenomenology*) is *not* full-blown epistemic scepticism, and thus to hold that the arguments presented here are more modest. In fact, Hegel's attitude to such epistemic scepticism was not to take it very seriously, seeming to hold that it was based on the excessive and unfulfillable demand that we assess and make due allowance for the fallibility of our belief-forming methods, before making any claim to knowledge: thus, Hegel's response to this form of epistemic scepticism was not to look for some sort of transcendental argument to give us proof or certainty, but to offer his famous jibe, that 'to seek to know before we know is as absurd as the wise resolution of Scholasticus, not to venture into the water until he had learned to swim'.⁸² Hegel's lack of concern with epistemic scepticism is also

Transcendental Arguments', in Hans Friedrich Fulda and Rolf-Peter Horstmann (eds.), *Skeptizismus und spekulatives Denken in der Philosophic Hegels* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1996), 204-25.

⁸² G. W. F. Hegel, *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, pt. I. *Logic*, trans. William Wallace, 3rd edn. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), § 10, p. 14. Cf. also G. W. F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 49, where, in a clear reference to Descartes, Hegel speaks dismissively of "what is ordinarily understood when the word "doubt" is used: shilly-shallying about this or that presumed truth, followed by a return to the truth again, after the doubt has been appropriately dispelled—so that at the end of the process the matter is taken to be what it was in the first place'.

reflected, I would argue, in his preference for ancient over modern scepticism,⁸³ where the focus of the former is much more obviously on justified or rational belief than on certainty, in so far as the sceptical charge of dogmatism rests on the claim that many of our beliefs are held on inadequate or insufficient grounds, as shown by the fact that equally good arguments can be given for their contraries.

Now, as we have seen, this is the kind of charge the Humean also presses, although he claims that we cannot or will not give up these beliefs, despite their lack of adequate grounding, going on to argue that they are clearly not held or formed through a rational process, otherwise they would not be so immune. It is this threat that Hegel finds in the work of Hume's main follower in Germany in this period: 'In Jacobi's philosophy, Reason is conceived only as instinct and feeling.'⁸⁴ In contrast to his dismissive attitude to epistemic scepticism, a sceptical position with such anti-rationalistic implications is taken very seriously indeed, and is not to be dismissed lightly (whilst at the same time Hegel recognizes that it may be used to serve the purposes of philosophy, by forcing us to see which of our beliefs *can* be rationally grounded).⁸⁵

If we take justificatory scepticism to be Hegel's principal target, I think it can be seen that the opening arguments of the *Phenomenology* address an issue related to the one we discussed in the previous section. The sceptical claim we have been examining up to now was that our immediate perceptual content is of nothing other than

⁸³ Cf. G. W. F. Hegel, *Relationship of Skepticism to Philosophy, Exposition of its Different Modifications and Comparison of the Latest Form with the Ancient One*, trans. H. S. Harris, in *Between Kant and Hegel: Texts in the Development of Post-Kantian Idealism*, trans. George di Giovanni and H. S. Harris (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1985), 311-62.

⁸⁴ G. W. F. Hegel, *Faith and Knowledge*, trans. Walter Cerf and H. S. Harris (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1977), 150. Jacobi's position here was influenced by Hamann, who had defended his fideism on the grounds that Hume had shown that not even belief in the existence of the external world could be given a rational justification, much less belief in the existence of God. For a discussion of Hamann and Jacobi's place in the German counter-enlightenment, see Frederick C. Beiser, *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987).

⁸⁵ As with the previous discussion of Kant, there is of course a scholarly issue regarding Hegel's intellectual engagement with Hume, and in particular with the section 'Of Scepticism with Regard to the Senses' in the *Treatise*. On this, see Kenneth R. Westphal, 'Hegel and Hume on Perception and Concept-Empiricism', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 36 (1998), 99-123, esp. pp. 101-9. See also Kenneth R. Westphal, *Hegel, Hume und die Identität wahrnehmbarer Dinge* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1998), 1-66.

our sensory states, from which the sceptic tried to show that belief in an external world of any sort is unjustifiable, as 'sounds, and tastes, and smells . . . appear not to have any existence in extension';⁸⁶ to which Kant responded by showing that the content of our perceptual experience must be given to us in spatial terms and so present us with such an external world directly, to make awareness of our sensory states possible. Even if Kant's argument is accepted, however, the sceptic may feel he has room to manoeuvre: for all it establishes is that perceptual experience can warrant beliefs like 'It is hot over here', or 'This is smooth', which still leaves a gap between such experience and most of our beliefs about the external world, in particular that it contains *objects*, and not merely properties located in space. If this is right, the sceptic will then claim that our ordinary beliefs have still not been perceptually justified, and will re-run his previous strategy, by denying that they can be given any inferential justification either, on similar grounds as before: namely, that to infer from 'This is smooth, red, spherical, and hard' to 'This is a billiard-ball' is unsound, as we lack any independent confirming evidence that things with the former properties have indeed been the latter in previous instances, and so have no universal premise ('All As so far observed have been Bs') on which to base the inference ('This is an A, therefore it is a B') in this instance. Thus, on the phenomenological response to the sceptic, more apparently needs to be done, if we are to show that even judgements like 'This is a cat' or 'Here is a table' can be given a perceptual justification.⁸⁷

The first move that such an argument might make can be discerned in the following passage from Michael Ayers:

There is ... no problem, from the point of view of epistemology, as to how we travel from blank atoms of sensation to the unified objects of experience. *If the latter had not been given in sensation, we could never have made*

⁸⁶ Hume, *Treatise*, book I, part IV, § 2, p. 191.

⁸¹ Cf. Armstrong's position in *Belief, Truth and Knowledge*, where he opts for what he calls a 'moderate' position concerning non-inferential (or perceptual) knowledge, between the 'pessimistic' view that non-inferential knowledge is confined to the subject's own sensory states' and the 'optimistic' view that it extends to seeing, dogs, tables, chairs, etc., arguing that 'it is tempting, and I think correct, to conclude that the presence of a *whole* dog is inferred from more elementary information' like 'There is something brown and furry over there' (D. M. Armstrong, *Belief, Truth and Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 165). It might be argued that Kant's transcendental claims can be extended to cover this sceptical position also; but I think Hegel's argument is still worth discussing, as it adds further details to how these claims might be taken.

the trip. If I see something red and square, it is easy to understand that there is no real problem about the unity of the redness and the squareness: and that any appearance of a problem arises from a misinterpretation of the possibility of abstracting the one from the other. We simply *see* that one and the same object is both red and square.⁸⁸

In the highlighted sentence, we have a hint, once again, of how a transcendental argument could be used to turn the sceptic's game against himself, by showing how in order to have experience of sensible properties like red and square, we must equally have experience of these properties as instantiated in *objects*, so that if we are able to make perceptually grounded judgements about properties, we must also be able to make similar judgements concerning material bodies, such as 'This thing is red and square', in so far as the former are only possible given the latter.⁸⁹

However, even if such an argument can be given, it is only the first move in providing a phenomenological defence of our beliefs about the world, which are not merely of the form 'Here is a red and square thing', but 'Here is a red and square kite', or 'Here is a brown table'. Ayers himself is reluctant to take the further step, to claim that the latter sort of judgements can also be given a perceptual grounding, although he seems tempted:

the claim that we can have primitive perceptual knowledge that there is a physical object before us is not the claim that we can have such knowledge that there is a coin or a tennis-ball or, still less, a bachelor before us. Admittedly we often say that we see that there are such objects present, yet what makes an object a coin or a bachelor neither is nor could have been visible. In the end we can appeal to the authority of the senses in support of the contention that a certain object is perceptibly just like a penny, but not that it is a penny. Counterfeit may be perceptually indiscriminable from currency. A traditional conclusion from this point has been that we do not see, but infer that the object before us is a penny. Why then does that conclusion have an air of paradox? Why do we talk so naturally not only of seeing pennies (which is understandable) but of seeing that objects are pennies, and even of seeing objects as pennies? The same question arises with respect to natural species. To identify the species of a living thing is

⁸⁸ Ayers, *Locke*, i. 189; first emphasis mine.

⁸⁹ Cf. *ibid.* 184: 'if we talk of "the sensation of yellow", we are talking of what is nothing but an abstraction from the sensory state, from the state of sensory awareness as a whole. It is not something we could conceivably have *except* as an aspect of our sensory awareness of things, the appearance to us of space and of things in space.'

to go beyond its sensible appearance, yet in characterizing the content of sensation nothing is more natural than to speak of 'seeing' pink rats, or of seeing a bush as a lion. On the other hand, the claim to see someone as a bachelor or as a professor would normally be taken metaphorically, to refer to some kind of judgement or imaginative performance rather than to sense-perception.^{90 91}

If, therefore, a phenomenological strategy is to be used to prevent the sceptic claiming that our belief relies on a problematic inference at *all* levels, two transcendental claims seem to be needed: the first (endorsed by Ayers) that experience of sensible properties requires experience as of objects, the second (rejected by him) that experience as of objects requires them to be seen as objects of particular kinds. I will now turn to Hegel's discussion of perception in the *Phenomenology*, and consider how far it can be interpreted as providing just such a two-stage argument, and with what success.

Hegel's discussion of perception comes in the first main section of the *Phenomenology*, on Consciousness, and follows his account of sense-certainty. His method here can be thought of as one of 'rational reconstruction': he is attempting to begin with as few presuppositions about the world and our experience of it as possible, and to show how much must be added to this very basic starting-point to make it coherent, in order to see how far this process of reconstruction obliges us to accept that a richer world-view is required. The move from sense-certainty to perception is therefore the first step in this sequence, as the former is shown to be a conception of consciousness that has taken the process of reduction too far, where all that consciousness is supposed to contain is experience of the world as 'This', or 'Here', or 'Now', or T, without any awareness of properties determining it." Hegel argues (in a way which parallels his

⁹⁰ Ibid. 190.

⁹¹ Cf. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, 58-9: 'Consciousness, for its part, is in this certainty only as a pure "I"; or I am in it only as a pure "This", and the object similarly only as a pure "This". I, *this* particular I, am certain of *this* particular thing, not because I, *qua* consciousness, in knowing it have developed myself or thought about it in various ways; and also not because *the thing* of which I am certain, in virtue of a host of distinct qualities, would be in its own self a rich complex of connections, or related in various ways to other things. Neither of these has anything to do with the truth of sense-certainty: here neither I nor the thing has the significance of a complex process of mediation; the "I" does not have the significance of a manifold imagining or thinking; nor does the "thing" signify something that has a host of qualities. On the contrary, the thing *is*, and it *is*, merely because it *is*. It *is*; this is the essential point for sense-knowledge, and this pure *being*, or this simple

discussion of Pure Being in the *Logic* that consciousness of this sort would in fact be empty, as it would lack any determinacy, any way of distinguishing what is 'This' from something else, 'Here' from somewhere else, and so on.⁹² Perception is therefore introduced as adding what was missing from sense-certainty: namely, awareness of what is experienced as determined by distinct properties, through which different regions of space and time can be picked out (e.g. 'Here it is hot, there it is cold').⁹³

This is, in effect, where (on my interpretation) Kant's Refutation of Idealism left us: that is, with experience of sensible properties in space, which represents the most conservative addition to the position occupied by sense-certainty. How, then, does Hegel make the next step, from 'Here it is hot' to 'Here is a hot thing'? His first move is to try the associationist route, and claim that although we do not yet experience objects as such, we come to believe in their existence because different properties appear to stand together in a relatively constant spatial relation:

This abstract universal medium, which can be called simply 'thinghood' or 'pure essence', is nothing else than what Here and Now have proved themselves to be, viz. a *simple togetherness* of a plurality; but the many are, *in their determinateness*, simple universals themselves. This salt is a simple Here,

immediacy, constitutes its *truth*. Similarly, certainty as a *connection* is an *immediate* pure connection: consciousness is "*I*", nothing more, a pure "This"; the singular consciousness knows a pure "This", or the single item.'

⁹² *Phenomenology*, 64: 'The *Here pointed out*, to which I hold fast, is similarly a *this* Here which, in fact, is *not* this Here, but a Before and Behind, an Above and Below, a Right and Left. The Above is similarly this manifold otherness of above, below, etc. The Here, which was supposed to have been pointed out, vanishes in other Heres, but these likewise vanish. What is pointed out, held fast, and abides, is a *negative* This, which is negative only when the Heres are taken as they should be, but, in being so taken, they supersede themselves; what abides is a simple complex of many Heres. The Here that is *meant* would be the point; but it is not: on the contrary, when it is pointed out as something that *is*, the pointing-out shows itself to be not an immediate knowing [of the point], but a movement from the Here that is *meant* through many Heres into the universal Here which is a plurality of simple Heres, just as the day is a simple plurality of Nows.'

⁹³ Cf. *ibid.* 67: 'This object [of perception] must now be defined more precisely, and the definition must be developed briefly from the result that has been reached; the more detailed development does not belong here. Since the principle of the object, the universal, is in its simplicity a *mediated* universal, the object must express this its nature in its own self. This it does by showing itself to be *the thing with many properties*. The wealth of sense-knowledge belongs to perception and not to immediate certainty, for which it was only the source of instances; for only perception contains negation, that is, difference or manifoldness, within its own essence.'

and at the same time manifold; it is white and *also* tart, *also* cubical in shape, of a specific gravity, etc. All these many properties are in a single simple 'Here', in which, therefore, they interpenetrate; none has a different Here from the others, but each is everywhere, in the same Here in which the others are. And, at the same time, without being separated by different Heres, they do not affect each other in this interpenetration. The whiteness does not affect the cubical shape, and neither affects the tart taste, etc.; on the contrary, since each is itself a simple relating of self to self it leaves the others alone, and is connected with them only by the indifferent Also. This Also is thus the pure universal itself, or the medium, the 'thinghood', which holds them together in this way.⁹⁴

Hegel now sets out to show that this conception of what is presented to us in experience is too limited, to show that (as Robert Pippin has put it) 'the *original* apprehension of the determinate properties *already* involves their being apprehended as properties of a particular thing'.⁹⁵

Hegel's argument here is not as clearly expressed as one might like, but the crucial passage appears to be this:

In the relationship which has thus emerged it is only the character of positive universality that is at first observed and developed; but a further side presents itself, which must also be taken into consideration. To wit, if the many determinate properties were strictly indifferent to one another, if they were simply and solely self-related, they would not be determinate; for they are only determinate in so far as they *differentiate* themselves from one another, and *relate* themselves to others as to their opposites. Yet; as thus opposed to one another they cannot be together in the simple unity of their medium, which is just as essential to them as negation; the differentiation of the properties, in so far as it is not an indifferent differentiation but is exclusive, each property negating the others, thus falls outside of this simple medium; and the medium, therefore, is not merely an Also, an indifferent unity, but a *One* as well, a unity which *excludes* an other. The One is the *moment of negation*; it is itself quite simply a relation of self to self

⁹⁴ Ibid. 68-9.

⁹⁵ Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism*, 126. The same point has also been made by Charles Taylor: 'The idea is that there is a kind of mutual dependency here, that we couldn't logically have our property concepts if we didn't operate with particulars, and reciprocally that we couldn't identify particulars without property concepts . . . The nub of Hegel's argument thus appears to be this: if we cannot operate with property concepts without attributing these to particulars (and vice versa), then any account of perception that cannot find a place for the multipropertied thing as object of perception, or that can account for particulars only as punctual properties (this smell, this patch of red), must be wrong' (Charles Taylor, 'The Opening Arguments of the *Phenomenology*', 169 and 178).

and it excludes an other; and it is that by which 'thinghood' is determined as a Thing.⁹⁶

Largely following Taylor,⁹⁷ I think this passage is to be interpreted as follows.

One of the lessons Hegel takes us to have learned from his discussion of sense-certainty is that experience cannot be (in his terminology) 'indeterminate': that is, just of 'This' or 'Now' or whatever, but must be of this-as-red or now-as-night. Likewise, he argues, experience of properties must be determinate: that is, it cannot be just of 'red' or 'sweet' but must be of red-as-a-colour, or sweet-as-a-smell, i.e. of the property as being of such and such a kind. Thus, to experience red *just* as red is no more possible for Hegel than to experience 'Now' just as 'Now', rather than as a colour that is red or a time (night, day, or whatever) that is now.

Hegel's next step is to argue that in the case of properties what enables us to experience them as determinate, and hence as differentiated into kinds, is that we can apply the concept of *opposition* to them, in the sense that I can come to think of red and green as

⁹⁶ Hegel, *Phenomenology*, 69.

⁹⁷ Taylor, 'The Opening Arguments of the *Phenomenology*', 169-71. It is interesting to note that, while Taylor's interpretation of Hegel's argument here fits a modest, experience-directed strategy, Taylor also defends such modesty elsewhere (a fact overlooked by some of Taylor's critics, like Forster, who take it for granted that Taylor's conception of transcendental arguments is more ambitious): cf. Charles Taylor, 'The Validity of Transcendental Arguments', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 79 (1978-9), 15-65, PP. 157-8, where Taylor is discussing transcendental arguments concerning the nature of the subject as embodied agent: 'What do these arguments establish? And how do they establish it?

To the first question, we might be tempted to reply simply, that if valid, they establish that we are in fact embodied subjects. But things aren't so simple . . . [as] no conclusion this strong can be drawn from an argument of this type. What is shown is that our thought, experience, and in general our functions as subjects, are such that they *must be described as* essentially the thought, experience, etc., of embodied agents. This says something about the nature of our life as subjects. It says for instance that *our experience is constituted by our sense of ourselves* as embodied agents. So we are inescapably *to ourselves* embodied subjects. Put in other terms, we cannot effectively exercise subjectivity, and be aware of a world, without *a sense of ourselves* as embodied subjects; for this sense is constitutive of our awareness . . .

In this connection, it is clear that there are certain ontological questions which lie beyond the scope of transcendental arguments. Kant recognized this in allowing that his arguments established nothing about things as they are in themselves, but only about the world as we experience it. And Barry Stroud has cautioned against trying to use transcendental arguments as an instrument to refute skepticism' (my emphases).

mutually exclusive. Thus, Hegel's claim seems to be that it is this conception of opposition that enables me to group properties into kinds (colours, smells, etc.), and it is their being presented to me as determinate in this way that makes experience of them possible. Hegel's final step is then to claim that unless properties were presented to us as instantiated in *objects*, this concept of opposition could not be applied to properties, as it is only because (for example) red and blue appear to be properties of different things (or parts of things) that I am then able to conceive of them as mutually exclusive in this way ('nothing can be red and blue all over'), as my experience of them as colours requires.

Now, the obvious objection to this argument is: why wouldn't it be enough for me to acquire and apply the concept of opposition to properties, and with it the concept of kinds that is (said to) result and be required, if these properties were just invariably perceived to occupy different spatio-temporal regions, rather than to be instantiated in things? This objection invites the response, however, that mere spatio-temporal differentiation is not sufficient to make it conceivable that properties stand in the sort of strongly oppositional relation that enables us to group them under kinds, where this differentiation merely tells us that certain qualities are distinct. Hegel's thought seems to be that only with the realization that properties inhere in things could we come to see that (for example) red and green are incompatible *qua* different members of the same kind, and not just distinct.

Hegel therefore takes himself to have shown that the picture of experience put forward by the associationist is incoherent, and that, in order to have experience of sensible properties, we must also have experience of these properties as inhering in things: in his terminology, the Also requires the One. This, however, does not take us all the way: for it merely establishes that judgements like 'This (thing) is red' can be given an experiential justification, but in order to show that judgements like 'This ball is red' can be justified in a similar way, a further step is required. In the perception section of the *Phenomenology*, Hegel does not spell out in a positive way where this step takes us, but he does argue the negative case, that some step beyond apprehension of objects as bare particulars is required.

Again, the details of Hegel's position are far from clear, but his basic argument seems to be this. Having established that apprehension

of objects is a necessary condition for apprehension of properties, he now considers what that apprehension consists in. On the one hand, he holds that the object cannot be apprehended as a bare (propertyless) substratum, for this would leave it utterly indeterminate and so impossible to distinguish from other objects, where this is required if any opposition between properties is to be conceivable to us. On the other hand, he argues that this determinacy cannot come from the object being seen as a collection of properties, for this would not be enough to account for these collections as having an underlying unity over and above this bundle of sensible properties.⁹⁸

Hegel considers various ways out of this dilemma in the perception section—including appeal to some Kantian notion of synthesis, whereby the subject constitutes the unified structure apparent in experience—all of which he claims are unsatisfactory. The dialectic then moves on to a kind of two-tier model, in which the ‘manifest image’ of the object is contrasted to a scientific picture of a world made up of interacting forces; but it seems clear that this is not how Hegel means things to be resolved, in the manner of some sort of scientific realism. Instead, the negative outcome of perception points us much further forward in the dialectic, towards some sort of Aristotelian solution, whereby it is because objects appear to us as differentiated into kinds that they have a determinateness that is irreducible to a bundle of sensory qualities, but which allows the object to be characterized in a way that was impossible for the mere substratum or One of perception. It is therefore because I see that the *cat* is wet or the *bear* is brown that these properties are perceived as inhering in things that have a determinacy which cannot then be constructed out of the former, as on the associationist model.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ Cf. Hegel, *Phenomenology*, 72-y ‘White is white only in opposition to black, and so on, and the Thing is One precisely by being opposed to others. But it is not as a One that it excludes others from itself, for to be a One is the universal relating of self to self, and the fact that it is a One rather makes it like all the others; it is through its *determinateness* that the thing excludes others... In other words, the Thing is the *Also*, or the *universal medium* in which the many properties subsist apart from one another, without touching or cancelling one another; and when so taken, the Thing is perceived as what is true.’

⁹⁹ Cf. Hegel, *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, pt. 3. *Philosophy of Mind*, trans. William Wallace and A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), § 449Z, p. 199: ‘But with reference to the relation of intuition to consciousness, the following remark must be made. In the broadest sense of the word, one could of course give the name of intuition to . . . immediate or sensuous consciousness . . . But if this name is to be taken in its proper significance, as rationally it must, then between

Thus Hegel, no less than Kant, provides a diagnosis and refutation of the kind of picture of experience that leads to Humean scepticism, and its attempt to set Nature above Reason.¹⁰⁰ The *Phenomenology* shows how the search for certainty leads to an excessively limited conception of experience, in which thought and intuition are rigidly separated, and where the only role for reason is to attempt to bridge the gap between judgement and 'the given' that then results. Hegel's response is to provide an immanent critique of this reductionist starting-point, by showing how experience cannot have this kind of impoverished character, and thus that we can and must begin our inquiry into the origin and justification of our belief-system with a richer basis than the sceptic allows. In this way, once again, a phenomenological transcendental argument strategy is used, in an attempt to turn the sceptic's game against himself, by showing how the sceptic's starting-point must be implicated in a more complex picture, which then can be used to undercut his sceptical claims.

that consciousness and intuition the essential distinction must be made that the former, in the *unmediated*, quite abstract certainty of itself, relates itself to the *immediate* individuality of the object, an individuality sundered into a multiplicity of aspects; whereas intuition is consciousness *filled with* the certainty of Reason, whose object is *rationally* determined and consequently not an individual torn asunder into its various aspects but a totality, a unified fullness of determinations.'

Cf. also Hegel, *Logic*, § 38Z, p. 62: 'Besides, this school makes sense-perception the form in which fact is to be apprehended; and in this consists the defect of Empiricism. Sense-perception as such is always individual, always transient: not indeed that the process of knowledge stops short at sensation: on the contrary, it proceeds to find out the universal and permanent element in the individual apprehended by sense. This is the process leading from simple perception to experience.'

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Hegel's discussion of Hume in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, where he characterizes his position as follows: 'the result which Hume arrives at is necessarily astonishment regarding the condition of human knowledge, a general state of mistrust, and a sceptical indecision—which indeed does not amount to much. The condition of human knowledge regarding which Hume so much wonders, he further describes as containing an antagonism between reason and instinct; this instinct, it is said, which embraces many sorts of powers, inclinations, &c., deceives us in many different ways, and reason demonstrates this. But on the other side it is empty, without content or principles of its own; and if a content is in question at all, it must keep to those inclinations. In itself reason thus has no criterion whereby the antagonism between individual desires, and between itself and the desires, may be settled. Thus everything appears in the form of an irrational existence devoid of thought; the implicitly true and right is not in thought, but in the form of an instinct, a desire' (G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, trans. E. S. Haldane and Frances H. Simson, 3 vols. (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1892-6), iii. 374-5)-

4.6 CONCLUSION

The aim of this chapter has been to show in some detail why a phenomenological transcendental argument strategy is needed to defuse normativist scepticism over the problem of the external world, why this is the best way of using such arguments, and why it makes sense to interpret Kant's Refutation of Idealism and Hegel's opening arguments in the *Phenomenology* in these terms. I do not deny that, with respect to the particular transcendental arguments we have examined, obscurities remain and difficulties can still be raised. However, I hope to have shown that no objection of *principle* can be made to this way of using transcendental arguments, in so far as the kind of conclusion attained (regarding the nature of experience) is appropriate to the level of scepticism addressed, thereby avoiding the criticism that, even in theory, transcendental arguments are unworkable.

There are, none the less, two problematic areas I would like to consider a little further. The first concerns how far any such phenomenological strategy can take us against the external world sceptic, and whether it can answer all such sceptical worries even when raised in a normativist form. The difficulty is that, in attempting to ground the justification for our beliefs in experience, there are none the less *some* upper limits to what experience can be said to contain, and at this point the sceptic can come back to us, and demand the sort of theoretical or inferential justification we have been trying to avoid. Thus, for example, in response to Strawson's claim that 'the employment of our ordinary full-blooded concepts of physical objects is indispensable to a strict, and strictly veridical account of our sensible experience', Ayer replies that 'such assumptions as that the objects were accessible to other observers, that they continued to exist unperceived, and ... that they continued in the possession of their phenomenological properties . . . surely are theoretical; and surely they are not indispensable to a veridical account of our sensible experience'.¹⁰¹ We have seen that transcendental arguments might be used to show how more is contained within sensible experience than Ayer allows; but his general point still holds, that, given the complexity of our judgements about the world, it seems unlikely that

¹⁰¹ A. J. Ayer, 'Replies', in G. F. Macdonald (ed.), *Perception and Identity* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan), 277-333, p. 292.

any plausible account of experience alone will be rich enough to justify them *all* in this manner; the gap between our experience and our beliefs will therefore need to be bridged by inference at *some* point, so what is to be gained from doing this later rather than sooner?

As I have mentioned earlier,¹⁰² it seems to me that these limits to the phenomenological transcendental argument strategy must be accepted; but it is important not to exaggerate them. After all, at some point a distinction between inferred and perceptual beliefs must be accepted by all parties; but the richer the data covered by the latter, the more easily we can justify the former. The difficulty posed by Humean scepticism was that *so much* has to be given a theoretical justification, whereas a less reductionist picture gives us considerably more to go on. The interesting question is where the upper and lower limits should be set, and here (as we have seen) transcendental arguments can play an important role.

Turning now to the second problematic issue: if the right way to respond to the normativist sceptic over the problem of the external world is in phenomenological terms, why do we need to introduce the machinery of transcendental arguments to do so?; why not simply *do* phenomenology, and *thereby* show the sceptic how ludicrously he has mischaracterized the nature of our experience as it actually is, regardless of whether his characterization is possible *qua* experience or not?¹⁰³

I think it would be a mistake to reply to this concern by arguing that the transcendental claim is somehow required by the dialectics of the situation: for all we need is to show that the sceptical characterization of experience is wrong, and if the purely descriptive approach can do this, nothing stronger is required. The problem, however, is whether phenomenological investigations can be carried

¹⁰² See above, § 3.2.2.

¹⁰³ Cf. Gregory McCulloch, *Using Sartre: An Analytical Introduction to Early Sartrean Themes* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 90: 'The traditional [empiricist position] is that we construct or infer our rich conception of the visual scene from the austere phenomenological base, just as viewers of real pictures learn to see them *as* pictures rather than as colour mosaics. What we "really" see is a patch of dappled brown, and we then feed in extra material, perhaps on the basis of previous experience, and claim to "see a blackbird". "Seeing", in this last, ordinary-language sense, is thus alleged to go beyond visual phenomenology . . . [But] This manoeuvre can be overturned by simple attention to what one's own visual experience is actually like, as recommended by Sartre and the Phenomenologists. Because talk of what is "given" or phenomenologically available just is talk of what consciousness is like, of how the world is presented to us, there can be no other way of assessing it.'

out in this descriptive manner, by just putting to oneself the question: 'what is my experience like?' Many phenomenologists have claimed that this is implausibly naive as an approach.¹⁰⁴ More importantly, the value of transcendental arguments in this context is *therapeutic*, in showing *why* such a mistaken view of experience has come about, by showing how the philosophical picture driving this reductionism cannot be made to hang together as an account of experience that is even *possible*. By so doing, I would argue, the transcendental approach provides a *diagnosis* of the source of scepticism here that gives it much greater philosophical depth and power.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge, 1962), 58: 'Nothing is more difficult than to know precisely *what we see*.'

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Kant's remark, that the point of his argument is not to prove something which 'the healthy understanding could not attain without all this faldral, but rather to deprive entirely of their force all the sophisticated subtleties which are raised against it' (*Reflexionen*, R5654, xviii. 313).

The Problem of Causality

In the previous chapter, I have presented and defended a use for transcendental arguments that allies them to a phenomenological response to normativist justificatory scepticism, as attempting to show that the sceptic's position is based on an impossibly limited conception of our perceptual content. Transcendental arguments of this sort are therefore experience-directed, in so far as they set out to demonstrate that this rich perceptual content is a necessary condition for the kind of mental life the sceptic takes as his starting-point: in this way, it is shown that we are entitled to believe much more about the world than the sceptic is prepared to allow, once the extent to which we appear to have experience of that world is established.

In this chapter I wish to consider a somewhat different approach, which takes a belief-directed rather than experience-directed form, using transcendental arguments to show that the picture we have of the world rests on particular beliefs that we take for granted in constructing that picture, and that (the transcendental claim is) this picture would be impossible for us to construct without them. To this extent, the approach to be considered shares Strawson's recent view that transcendental arguments can be used as a way of 'investigating the connections between the major structural elements of our conceptual scheme', in order to show that 'one type of exercise of conceptual capacity is a necessary condition of another'.¹ Where this approach differs from Strawson's, however, is in rejecting his naturalistic claim that the anti-sceptical force of such demonstrations is to show that scepticism is either senseless or idle: rather, the point of such demonstrations (it is claimed) is to show that the beliefs that are thereby shown to form major structural elements in our world-picture can be given a justification in *coherentist* terms, in line with

¹ Strawson, *Skepticism and Naturalism*, 22.

the view that, if a belief has such a role in making our belief-system coherent, then it is justified. The suggestion is thus that, when put in a coherentist context, transcendental arguments can have considerable justificatory potential.

Now, my aim in this chapter is to put some flesh on these bones, by offering an account of Kant's Second Analogy in these terms, in which (I will claim) Kant addresses the sceptical problem of causality in this way. As before, my hope is to balance philosophical and interpretative issues: that is, to offer an account of Kant's text that is reasonably faithful, whilst understanding it in a way that makes good sense and has some positive merit. I hope therefore that the Second Analogy can be seen as a successful paradigm of the kind of coherentist transcendental argument strategy sketched above. In order to show this, I will first consider Kant's sceptical target in the Second Analogy, and why taking that target to be normativist justificatory scepticism helps avoid certain familiar difficulties with the argument; and I will therefore show how the Humean problem of causality can be presented in these terms (§ 5.1). I will then go on to consider in a general way how a coherentist approach can be used to answer the normativist justificatory sceptic, and also to consider how far Kant may be said to have adopted this kind of approach (§ 5.2). I will then examine the Second Analogy itself (in § 5.3), to see how far it can be read as a coherentist transcendental argument, designed to answer the normativist justificatory sceptic. Remaining philosophical and interpretative objections will then be dealt with in the final section of the chapter (§ 5.4).

5.1 THE PROBLEM OF CAUSALITY AND VARIETIES OF SCEPTICISM

The aim of this section is to show that in the Second Analogy Kant can be read as addressing what is primarily a form of normativist justificatory scepticism regarding our causal beliefs, rather than a sceptical position of some other sort (epistemic or reliabilist). I will claim that we can thus avoid many of the problems standardly raised against the argument when more ambitiously interpreted, whilst making good sense of much (if not all) of Kant's own presentation of it.

Now, in attempting to elucidate Kant's intentions in the Second Analogy, it is not immediately clear why there should be much difficulty, for Kant makes his objective fairly explicit: the target is Hume's causal scepticism, which (as everyone knows) woke Kant from his dogmatic slumbers, so urgent were the difficulties it raised. However, this in itself does not get us very far, for there are three complicating factors. The first is that Hume's causal scepticism is complex and many-layered, as well as being itself open to contrasting interpretations, making it hard to see at exactly what point Kant's attack is supposed to be focused: at Hume's doubts concerning the notion of causal powers or forces? at his subjectivism regarding necessity? at his apparent questioning of the principle that 'every event has a cause'? at his doubts concerning the uniformity of causation? or at his inductive scepticism? A second complicating factor springs from the hermeneutic principle of charity: namely, the difficulty of finding a conclusion for the Second Analogy that leaves some discernible gap between Hume and Kant on this issue, but which does not make Kant's actual argument vulnerable to obvious objections and counter-arguments. And, a third complicating factor is the result of Kant's architectonic: the Second Analogy is not the only place in which Kant deals with the issue of causality and related matters, so there is room for dispute over exactly how much is intended to be settled here, and how much elsewhere.

Rather than attempting to address all these complexities straight away, I wish to approach them indirectly, by considering a broader and prior question, namely: in viewing 'the Humean problem of causality' as a sceptical issue, what *kind* of sceptical issue did Kant take it to be? that is (in our terms) did he take it to be epistemic, reliabilist, or normativist? I will consider each option in turn, arguing that the third is the most satisfactory view.

If we take Kant's target to be a form of epistemic scepticism regarding causality, then the goal must be to show the certainty of some proposition which, according to the sceptic, cannot be established conclusively. An obvious candidate for such a proposition is the causal principle: 'Every event has a cause'; and it has often been argued (or taken for granted) by commentators that Kant's aim in the Second Analogy is indeed to show that the causal principle is certain in this way. Thus, Kant's target is supposed to be Hume's sceptical claim in the *Treatise*, that this principle is 'neither intuitively nor demonstrably certain', in so far as

the separation ... of the idea of a cause from that of a beginning of existence, is plainly possible for the imagination; and consequently the actual separation of these objects is so far possible, that it implies no contradiction nor absurdity; and is therefore incapable of being refuted by any reasoning from mere ideas; without which 'tis impossible to demonstrate the necessity of a cause.²

On this account, Kant's aim is supposed to be to provide the proof for the causal principle which Hume says is not available, thereby establishing its certainty; and *qua* transcendental argument, the proof is supposed to work by showing that the principle must hold, as a necessary condition for the possibility of experience (or, experience of a certain sort), as follows:

- (i) We have experience of kind *k*.
- (2) We could not have experience of this kind unless every event has a cause.

Therefore

- (3) Every event has a cause.

Kant is thus read as adopting what I earlier called a foundationalist transcendental argument strategy,³ directed against Hume's epistemic scepticism regarding the status of the causal principle.

It would be foolish to deny that textual support can be found for this reading. Kant does indeed appear to make the causal principle the focus of the Second Analogy, setting this out as the proposition to be proved thereby; and, in the part of the *Critique* on 'Transcendental Doctrine of Method' where Kant presents perhaps his clearest summary of what he takes a transcendental argument to be, it seems to fit the structure outlined above.⁴ But, as we shall see, similarly weighty textual support can be found for other readings, suggesting (at the very least) that different strands can be found in Kant's argument, so the question is 'why pick this one?', when this question may be answered in terms of charity: namely, is this position philosophically defensible?

² Hume, *Treatise*, book I, part III, § 3, pp. 79-80.

³ See above, § 3.1.1.

⁴ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A783/B811: 'In transcendental knowledge, so long as we are concerned only with concepts of the understanding, our guide is the possibility of experience. Such proof does not show that the given concept (for example, of that which happens) leads *directly* to another concept (that of a cause); for such a transition would be a *salvus* which could not be justified. The proof proceeds by showing that experience itself, and therefore the object of experience, would be impossible without a connection of this kind.'

The central philosophical difficulty with this reading, predictably enough, is with the transcendental claim contained in the second premise, which is implausibly strong. Accounts differ over exactly what feature of experience is said to depend on the fact that all events are causal (whether this is our capacity to distinguish between subjective succession in our representations and objective succession in the world; to place events in an objective time series; or to distinguish between experience of events and experience of unchanging objects); but, whichever is chosen, it appears that it would be enough if *some* or *most* events had causes. The literature on the Second Analogy is replete with objections to it along these lines, but briefly to outline one: against the claim that causality must be ubiquitous, as otherwise we would not be able to re-identify objects in our experience, it is argued that such re-identification could occur even if some changes occurred for no reason, provided a good deal of the behaviour of objects could be predicted in causal terms.⁵ It is hard to stop objections of this sort looking not only plausible, but decisive.

It might be said, however, that an argument for a similar conclusion could be constructed, which did not rest on the problematic claim of causal ubiquitousness, but on the weaker claim that for a subject to experience an event, it is a necessary condition that it be caused, because only those events that have causes are experienceable by minds like ours. This claim is weaker, because it asserts that being caused is a condition for certain types of experience (namely, experience of events); but it does not make causal *ubiquitousness* such a condition. We therefore have the following argument, using this weaker transcendental claim:

- (1) We have experience of events $e_1, e_2, e_3 \dots e_n$.
- (2) We could not have experience of an event unless it had a cause.
Therefore
- (3) All these events $e_1, e_2, e_3 \dots e_n$ have causes.

⁵ Cf. Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense*, 146: 'Kant argued . . . for the conclusion that the Law of Universal Causality held for all possible experience, i.e. for the conclusion that there existed strictly sufficient conditions for absolutely every change that we can take cognizance of. Of course we cannot regard any such absolute conclusion as established by the considerations just put forward. We do not have to suppose that explanatory conditions, fully stated, of every change or absence of change must be strictly sufficient conditions. We do not have to suppose that there must always be an explanatory condition if only we could find it. We could accommodate some inexplicable objective change, and some mere exceptions to our law-like expectations, without damage to the necessary but loosely woven mesh of our concepts of the objective.'

This argument falls short of the desired conclusion, namely that ‘every event has a cause’; but an obvious way to get to this conclusion is to add the further premise:

- (4) There are no events that are not experientiable by us.
from which it would indeed follow that
- (5) Every event has a cause.

As this shows, however, there is some cost involved in weakening the second premise, as we are then seemingly obliged to have recourse to the kind of idealism implied by the new fourth premise, that there are no events other than those we can experience.

This raises a number of issues and responses. First, even if we are prepared to pay the price of giving up a certain sort of realism about events, is the second premise here any more plausible than the previous version? Presumably, on this view, whilst it is granted to Hume that there is nothing incoherent in the idea that an event could exist without a cause, there *is* something incoherent in the idea that we have *experience* of that event in those circumstances; but why, if the event could *happen* causelessly, should this causelessness prevent us from experiencing it? It might be said that if an event has no cause, then I cannot causally relate it to anything else in my experience, and that this is required for me to have experience of it. But this seems too strong: for, as Kant himself allows, we often do not know, when we see something happen, what its cause is, so it must be possible for us to experience an event without being required to know what its causal relations are; but, if I do not need to know *what* they are, why does it have to *have any!*

It might be said, none the less, that *if* this difficulty could be got over, then the account of the Second Analogy I have sketched has its attractions, at least on interpretative grounds: for, even if there is a price of idealism to be paid, then Kant (as an idealist) would surely have been prepared to pay it. But this then raises the large question of whether, given that Kant was an idealist, he was an idealist of *this* type. Certainly many would dispute this, as they would deny that Kant held the sort of metaphysical idealism needed to support this position: namely, only experienceable events exist, because events are constituted by us in experience.⁶ There is also a major

⁶ For a recent reading of Kant that denies he was an idealist in this sense, see Rae Langton, *Kantian Humility: Our Ignorance of Things in Themselves* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

dialectical problem in taking the Second Analogy in this way: for it now appears that Kant's refutation of Hume relies on an idealist premise which it would be easy for the Humean to reject, so that the supposedly 'immanent' feature of the transcendental argument has been lost. In reply, it might be said that this merely reveals why it is a mistake to treat this argument as anti-sceptical: in fact, it is an indirect argument for idealism, designed to show that only *if* idealism is assumed can we retain the causal principle with certainty. This response is also dialectically weak, however: for why should we not rather prefer to preserve our realism, and abandon the latter incorrigibility claim instead?

These Stroudian difficulties with the Second Analogy may be briefly illustrated by reference to criticisms offered by James Van Cleve of Lewis White Beck's interpretation, where Beck presents the argument as sufficient to prove the causal principle.⁷ Van Cleve sets out Beck's account of the Second Analogy as follows (where 'A' and 'B' stand for states and parts of things, and 'a' and 'P' stand for representations which are respectively *of* A and B):

(1) We are able to decide that a sequence of representations a-fl is evidence for an event, viz., a sequence of states A-B, only if we believe that a cannot occur after P (i.e., that no representation of a's type ever immediately succeeds a representation of P's type).

(2) If we believe that a cannot occur after p, then we believe that B cannot occur before A (i.e. that no member of B precedes any member of A).

(3) We are able to decide that a sequence of representations a-p is evidence for a sequence of states A-B only if we believe that B cannot occur before A. (From (1) and (2).)

(4) If a state B cannot occur before a state A, then A is the cause of B.

(5) We are able to decide that a sequence of representations a-p is evidence for a sequence of states A—B only if we believe that A is the cause of B. (From (3) and (4).)

(6) 'The experience of something happening is possible only on the assumption that appearances in their succession ... are determined by the preceding state'.⁸

QED.

⁷ Lewis White Beck, 'Once More Unto the Breach: Kant's Answer to Hume, Again', *Ratio*, 9 (1967) 33-7 > P- 35 > and James Van Cleve, 'Four Recent Interpretations of Kant's Second Analogy', *Kant-Studien*, 64 (1973), 71-87, pp. 79-80.

⁸ This is a paraphrase of the last two sentences of the first paragraph of Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A195/B240.

Van Cleve then offers the following criticism of this argument, along familiar Stroudian lines:

(6) is ambiguous. What is it that the experience of something happening requires: merely that we *adopt* the assumption that appearances are determined by the preceding state, or that the assumption be *true*? On the second alternative (6) is not supported by the premises of the argument, since they only required that we have certain beliefs, not that those beliefs be true. On the first alternative (6) does follow from the preceding steps, amounting as it does to a restatement of (5). But then we have the problem that the conclusion is weaker than what Kant wanted to prove. For he wanted to prove that the experience of events takes place only if the events are caused, and not merely *believed* to be caused.⁹

Van Cleve here forces on us the familiar dilemma: either we make the conclusion weak enough to be defensible by plausible (because correspondingly weak) transcendental claims, but then seemingly fall short of our sceptical target; or we go for a conclusion that is strong enough to unsettle the sceptic, but discover that we cannot find a convincing transcendental claim to base it on. This dilemma bites, because of the sceptical target in question. Thus, taking Kant's objective to be the ambitious one of refuting the epistemic sceptic via a truth-directed transcendental argument, Van Cleve claims that, on Beck's interpretation, it fails: for the premises are only strong enough to show something about what we believe, whereas the conclusion is required to establish something about how things are, if we are to answer the sceptic deductively in this way.

It appears, then, that it is unsatisfactory to take the Second Analogy as presenting a truth-directed argument against some sort of epistemic scepticism, and thus to claim that Kant's central aim was to answer Hume by establishing the certainty of the causal principle. We may now briefly consider the second option: namely, that Kant set out to resolve problems raised by the reliabilist justificatory sceptic over how far our epistemic methods can be shown to be truth-conducive. On this reading, the obvious focus for Kant's argument would be Hume's inductive scepticism, and the apparent circularity involved in our justification of induction over other

⁹ Van Cleve, 'Four Recent Interpretations of Kant's Second Analogy', 80. Van Cleve also offers some other, more specific, criticisms of Beck's argument that will not concern us here, as it is the general problem that forms the focus of our discussion.

procedures. The main objection to this approach is that there is no textual evidence in its support. It may be that Kant addresses this issue at some later points in the *Critique* or in other works,¹⁰ but in general Walker's assessment must be accepted, that 'induction was never a major preoccupation of Kant's';¹¹ it certainly does not seem to figure as a concern in the Second Analogy. This relative indifference to what we now take to be a central element in Hume's causal scepticism may reflect nothing more than a difference between the way Hume was originally taken up and how we read him now; but it might reflect something of greater philosophical interest, namely Kant's predisposition towards a more deontological normativist approach as regards our doxastic practice, whereby methods such as induction are just taken as intrinsically rational, so that reliabilist concerns of this sort simply drop out.

If, then, the Second Analogy is not read as taking issue with either the epistemic or the reliabilist sceptic, it now remains to consider what form it might have when seen as directed against the normativist justificatory sceptic, and why this reading is both textually plausible and philosophically attractive. My main concern in the rest of this section will be with the interpretative issue of squaring this account with a general view of Kant's aims, and of showing how the issues this account addresses are raised in Kant's text. I will then go on in the next section to show in general terms how a coherentist transcendental argument strategy might be used to deal with such issues, before offering a reading of the Second Analogy as a successful refutation of Hume's causal scepticism along these lines.

In order to motivate this reading, it is first necessary to see what Hume's causal scepticism amounts to, when taken as normativist, rather than epistemic (how can we be certain that every event has a cause?) or reliabilist (how can it be shown that induction is truth-conducive?). On the normativist reading I propose, the central issue raised by Hume's scepticism does not concern the causal *principle*

¹⁰ Cf. Henry E. Allison, 'Kant's Deduction of the Principle of Purposiveness as an Answer to Hume', in Hans-Johann Glock (ed.), *Strawson and Kant*, forthcoming, where Allison argues that the Introduction to the *Critique of Judgement* contains Kant's response to Hume on this issue.

¹¹ Walker, *Kant*, 6. In his more recent paper, 'Induction and Transcendental Argument', Walker has suggested that Kant addresses the issue of induction in the section on the Dialectic of Regulative Ideas (A643-704/B670-732). For a critical assessment of this suggestion, see Graham Bird's comment on Walker's paper, 'Kant and the Problem of Induction: A Reply to Walker'.

(every event has a cause), but the causal *relation*, and our beliefs about this relation, namely its supposed necessity. At the heart of Hume's sceptical position regarding causality, on this account, is the suggestion that although we invariably think we have reason to believe that there is a necessary causal connection between events, as a result of which *B* *had* to follow *A*, this belief is strictly speaking insupportable, because it is not warranted either by experience directly (all we ever actually *perceive* is that *B* has invariably followed *A*), or by reason (as the existence of *B* cannot be logically inferred from the existence of *A*). This aspect of Hume's scepticism about causality is therefore not in the Cartesian tradition, of questioning the certainty of some belief (for example, the belief that every event has a cause); rather, it is part of his overall naturalistic project, of showing how we are less rational than we like to think, in so far as our thinking does not fall under rational belief-forming methods, but rather comes about through the operation of psychological mechanisms like imagination, which he adduces as the real ground for our beliefs concerning the causal relation.

Kant shows that he took seriously this normativist aspect of Hume's scepticism in the following passage from the *Prolegomena*, where his primary focus is on the causal relation rather than the causal principle:

Hume started in the main from a single but important concept in metaphysics, namely that of the *connection of cause and effect* (together with its consequential concepts of force and action etc.). He challenges Reason, who pretends to have conceived this concept in her womb, to give an account of herself and say with what right she thinks: that anything can be of such a nature, that if it is posited, something else must thereby also be posited necessarily; for that is what the concept of cause says. He proved irrefutably: that it is wholly impossible for reason to think such a conjunction *a priori* and out of concepts. For this conjunction contains necessity; but it is quite impossible to see how, because something is, something else must also necessarily be, and how therefore the concept of such an *a priori* connection can be introduced. From this he inferred that Reason completely deceives herself with this concept, in falsely taking it for her own child, whereas it is nothing but a bastard of the imagination fathered by experience. The imagination, having by experience brought certain representations under the law of association, passes off a subjective necessity arising out of this, namely custom, for an objective necessity from insight. From this he inferred: reason has no power to think such connections, not even only to think them universally, because its concepts would then be mere fictions, and all its ostensibly *a priori* knowledge is nothing but falsely stamped ordinary experience;

which is as much as to say that there is no metaphysics at all, and cannot be any.¹²

Kant shows here how impressed he is by Hume's argument and its implications. It would appear to show that what tempts us to go beyond what we actually observe in the succession of events or objects, and to think in terms of a causal connection between events, is the sense that we possess a legitimate conception of necessary causal powers or forces, of things in the world being determined; but, according to Kant, on the one hand Hume successfully shows that nothing *reason* tells us about the world can warrant this belief, for this can only supply us with the idea of *logical* necessity, which is too strong, while on the other hand, experience itself is too weak, as we cannot claim to observe any necessary connection between events. This enables Hume to point to the imagination as the source of our belief, in a way that none the less leaves the belief unwarranted, in so far as the imagination is not a legitimate belief-forming method, so that his challenge to Reason remains unanswered.

We have therefore seen what the problem of causality looks like when seen from the perspective of normativist scepticism, and we have seen in a general way that there is evidence to show that the problems it poses shaped Kant's thinking. However, before proceeding to show that Kant adopted a coherentist transcendental argument strategy to deal with this aspect of Hume's causal scepticism, a preliminary interpretative objection must be considered: namely, that Kant himself did not hold the necessitarian view of causation that Hume's scepticism addresses; or, if he did, it was not his concern to defend this view in the Second Analogy.

On the first point, some commentators have claimed that Kant's conception of the causal relation 'is only marginally different from Hume's',¹³ and that his position can be assimilated to that of some

¹² Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics that Will be Able to Present Itself as a Science*, iv. 257-8, trans. P. Gray Lucas (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1953), pp. 5-6. Cf. also *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*, iv. 476, trans. James Ellington (Indianapolis: Bobbs Merrill, 1970), p. 14, where Kant summarizes Hume's view of causality as 'mere deception due to habit', and the *Critique of Practical Reason*, v. 12-14, trans. Lewis White Beck (Indianapolis: Bobbs Merrill, 1956), pp. 12-14.

¹³ Walsh, *Kant's Criticism of Metaphysics*, 142. For readings of Kant which (like mine) set Kant at odds with Hume here, cf. Gordon G. Brittan Jr., 'Kant, Closure and Causality', in William L. Harper and Ralf Meerbote (eds.), *Kant on Causality, Freedom and Objectivity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 66-82, and Harold Langsam, 'Kant, Hume and Our Ordinary Concept of Causality', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 54 (1994), 625-47.

sort of regularity theorist. It is hard to square this claim with passages such as the following, however:

For this concept [causality] makes strict demand that something, A, should be such that something else, B, follows from it *necessarily and in accordance with an absolutely universal rule*. Appearances do indeed present cases from which a rule can be obtained according to which something usually happens, but they never prove the sequence to be *necessary*. To the synthesis of cause and effect there belongs a dignity which cannot be empirically expressed, namely, that the effect not only succeeds upon the cause, but that it is posited *through* it and arises *out of* it. This strict universality of the rule is never a characteristic of empirical rules; they can acquire through induction only comparative universality, that is, extensive applicability.¹⁴

Experience does indeed show that one appearance customarily follows upon another, but not that this sequence is necessary, nor that we can argue *a priori* and with complete universality from the antecedent, viewed as a condition, to the consequent.¹⁵

The concept of cause contains a rule according to which one state follows another necessarily; but experience can only show us that one state of things often or, at most, commonly follows another, and can procure neither strict universality nor necessity, etc.¹⁶

It therefore seems that Kant held the sort of view which Hume took to be problematic, and this is why he felt the problem raised by the latter, for he recognizes (as these quotations show) that, *since* the causal relation is a necessary one, it cannot be justified by appeal to experience, in so far as 'Experience tells us, indeed, what is, but not that it must necessarily be so, and not otherwise.'¹⁷

However, some may object here, not that Kant *did* not hold this view of causation, but that he *should* not have, because it leads him to make the same assumption as Hume: namely, that we cannot directly perceive causal powers, and thus that our belief in causal relations cannot be justified by appeal to experience. Critics of Hume are fond of pointing out that, in his famous example of the impact of two billiard balls and many other cases, we do not just see motions and changes in motion, and the billiard balls touching: we also see the one *hit* the other, thereby seeing the relation between

¹⁴ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A91/B124.

¹⁵ Ibid. A1 12.

¹⁶ Kant, *Prolegomena*, iv. 316, trans. Gray Lucas, p. 77.

¹⁷ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, At.

the two whereby the movement of the second is caused.¹⁸ Such critics allow, however, that even if this is accepted as phenomenologically more plausible than the more atomistic Humean view, it does not warrant the belief that the causal relation involves any *necessary* connection between event *types*, but only *particular* relations between these *particular* events; but they then go on to suggest that the necessitarian view of causation is misleading anyway, and should be abandoned.” Now, I cannot here consider the philosophical merits of this position, but for our purely interpretative purposes this dispute is enlightening: for it helps to show why it is that Kant did not attempt to provide an experience-directed transcendental argument in support of *his* (necessitarian) claims about causation, and thus did not adopt a phenomenological transcendental argument against the Humean sceptic, of the sort we considered in previous chapters: to do so, he would have had to abandon this necessitarian view of causation, as these phenomenological critics of Hume recognize and bring out.²⁰

¹⁸ See e.g. C. J. Ducasse, ‘On the Nature and the Observability of the Causal Relation’, reprinted in Ernest Sosa (ed.), *Causation and Conditionals* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 114-25; G. E. M. Anscombe, ‘Causality and Determination’, reprinted in Ernest Sosa (ed.), *Causation and Conditionals* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 63-81; Rom Harré and E. H. Madden, *Causal Powers* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1975); and the discussion in Galen Strawson, *The Secret Connexion*, 231-42. Cf. Harré and Madden, *Causal Powers*, 53: ‘We do not perceive an avalanche and the subsequent destruction but the avalanche destroying the village and vegetation of the countryside, just as we do not perceive waves and the subsequent disappearance of shoreline but the waves eating away the shoreline. In the same way we do not perceive the wind and then subsequent bending of the trees, but wind-bending-the-trees.’

¹⁹ Cf. Anscombe, ‘Causality and Determination’, 67-8: ‘If A comes from B, this does not imply that every A-like thing comes from some B-like thing or set-up or that every /Hike thing or set-up has an A-like thing coming from it; or that given B, A had to come from it, or that given A, there had to be B for it to come from. Any of these may be true, but if any is, that will be an additional fact, not comprised in A’s coming from B.’

²⁰ This is my response to the complaint by Mark Sacks against my coherentist approach to the problem of causality: ‘[Stem’s] reconstructed arguments merely [establish] a belief in a causal order to be justified on the grounds that it is presupposed by, and so coheres with, the rest of the belief-set; in fact the argument shows that we need the belief to be *upheld by the facts*. In a nutshell, what we need is not a *belief* in rule-governed ordering, but an *experience* of one’ (Mark Sacks, ‘Transcendental Arguments and the Inference to Reality: A Reply to Stem’, in Robert Stem (ed.), *Transcendental Arguments: Problems and Prospects* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 67-82, p. 77). I take it that the foregoing discussion has shown that where Kant agreed with Hume (against the sort of view put forward by Sacks) is that no such experience is possible, so that another justificatory route needed to be found.

We may now consider the second interpretative objection: namely, even if Kant wanted to uphold a non-regularity view of causation, it was not his aim to do so in the Second Analogy, which is merely focused on the causal principle. Now, I have admitted that there is textual support for this latter reading; however, there is textual support for the claim that Kant *also* wished to justify our conception of the causal relation (as he took that conception to be), as can be seen in his talk of that relation in terms of *rules*, in passages such as the following:

In conformity with such a rule there must lie in that which precedes an event the condition of a rule according to which this event invariably and necessarily follows . . . Therefore, since there certainly is something that follows, I must refer it necessarily to something else which precedes it and upon which it follows in conformity with a rule, that is, of necessity. The event, as the conditioned, thus affords reliable evidence of some condition, and this condition is what determines the event.²¹

Passages such as these suggest that it is an exaggeration to claim that 'Kant's main concern in the second Analogy is to offer a proof of the causal *principle*-, we look in the section in vain for a detailed exposition of his views on the causal *relation*' ;²² at the very least, Kant's concerns with the sceptical issues raised by the latter seem to carry equal weight with those raised by the former.

It might be said, of course, that the real reason to focus on Kant's arguments concerning the causal principle rather than the causal relation are philosophical and charitable, in that the Second Analogy is most *effective* when read in this way.²³ We have already seen, however, that clear objections can be made to the Analogy when read as a proof of the causal principle; it now remains to be seen whether it comes out any better when read as a justification for our belief in the necessity of the causal relation, in the face of Hume's sceptical claim that this belief cannot be given any rational warrant.

²¹ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, At93-4/B238-9.

²² Walsh, *Kant's Criticism of Metaphysics*, 141.

²³ The supposed dialectical advantages of this reading of the Second Analogy are supported by (amongst others) Gerd Buchdahl in his *Metaphysics and the Philosophy of Science* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1969), 648-51, and Allison in his *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, 230-4.

5.2 KANT AND COHERENCE AS A NORM

In the previous section, we saw that our belief that causes somehow necessitate their effects is vulnerable to the normativist justificatory sceptic like Hume. Following Hume, Kant accepted that our belief that if e , happens, e_2 *had* to happen, cannot be grounded in any sort of incoherence in the idea of e_2 occurring without e ; and nor can experience tell us that e_1 and e_2 are causally related in this sense. However, Kant did not want to accept Hume's sceptical conclusion (as he saw it),²⁴ that 'Reason completely deceives herself with this concept', such that our causal judgements are all strictly speaking unwarranted. The difficulty we face in responding to the normativist justificatory sceptic here is to show that such beliefs can be fitted under our 'deepest logical and intellectual standards and procedures' and hence shown to be justified, whilst recognizing that these judgements are neither analytically nor empirically grounded. Can any such standard be found?

Now, some commentators have claimed to find a response to this difficulty in Kant that invokes *coherence* as a standard we can appeal to, that is, if S 's belief-set is more coherent with the belief that p as a member than without it or with any alternative, then this belief is justified for S .²⁵ An interpretation of Kant's position along these lines is suggested by a number of the prominent coherentists writing in the idealist tradition, such as A. C. Ewing and Brand Blanshard. Ewing claims that 'Kant's view was the beginning of a far-reaching theory of knowledge, later known as the coherence theory, according to which knowledge is organization into a system and conformity with the system becomes the sole criterion of truth',²⁶ whilst Blanshard writes that 'The Kantian deduction of the categories is not the argument that would first suggest itself as an application of coherence, but there is no reason to deny it is one.'²⁷ These writers

²⁴ It might be argued that Kant's emphasis on Hume's sceptical outlook is exaggerated, and that Hume's position also contains a positive, now-sceptical phase, so that his final stance is not sceptical at all. Whatever the truth of this view of Hume, what matters for our purposes is that Kant gave priority to the first, negative phase, and so read Hume's naturalism in sceptical terms.

²⁵ For this characterization of the coherentist norm, derived from Dancy, see above, p. 103.

²⁶ A. C. Ewing (ed.), *The Idealist Tradition* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1957), 16.

²⁷ Brand Blanshard, *The Nature of Thought*, 2 vols. (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1939), ii. 258. For a more recent reading of Kant that also stresses coherentist aspects

were largely following F. H. Bradley, in taking it that for any individual the test for the truth of a belief is whether 'to take [it] as error, would entail too much disturbance of my world':²⁸ in their view, Kant also applied this test in attempting to warrant beliefs that could not be supported in any other way. Ewing thus foreshadows the sort of coherentist approach to the problem of causality that will be attributed to Kant in this chapter when he comments:

The coherence theory rightly emphasises the fact that the consequences [in note: I do not mean the practical consequences] of a principle may help to justify the principle as well as *vice versa*. This provides a way, I think, of justifying fundamental principles which would otherwise have to be taken either as based merely on an irreducible self-evidence or as arbitrary postulates. Thus to my mind the ultimate proof of causality is constituted by the fact that without it we could have no sort of coherent system of judgements about events in time.²⁹

Ewing does not mention Kant in this passage; but, given what he says about Kant's coherentism elsewhere, he would surely allow for a reading of Kant's position that shared this approach.³⁰

If coherentism means being prepared to take 'the claim of system as an arbiter of fact',³¹ what did coherentists like Ewing and Blanshard suppose to be involved in this? Blanshard answers as follows: 'What really tests [a] judgement is the extent of our accepted

of his position, cf. Rosenberg, *One World and Our Knowledge of It*, 19-20: 'What Kant primarily rejects, then, is not the epistemological principles of classical empiricism but its tacit commitment to an epistemological atomism—the conviction that concepts are to be legitimized and judgements to be warranted, if at all, individually and in isolation from any broader conceptual setting. And what, in the first instance, he puts in its place is a species of representational holism. The primary question of legitimacy is to attach not to individual concepts or judgements but to a larger conceptual structure in which they are embedded as logically indispensable features or aspects.'

²⁸ F. H. Bradley, 'On Truth and Coherence', reprinted in his *Essays on Truth and Reality* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1914), 202-18, p. 212.

²⁹ Ewing, *Idealism: A Critical Survey*, 247.

³⁰ Cf. A. C. Ewing, *Kant's Treatment of Causality* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Triebner, 1924), 13-14: 'had [Hume] shown that the synthetic, indemonstrable principle of causality was implied in all our empirical knowledge and not only a foundation for all scientific arguments he would have, by this means, provided as good a proof of causality as could be given for any principle, namely, by showing that we must either believe it or believe nothing at all. This was, in fact, the work of Kant.' Cf. also *ibid.* too.

³¹ F. H. Bradley, 'Coherence and Contradiction', reprinted in his *Essays on Truth and Reality* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1914), 219-44, p. 219.

world that is implicated with it and would be carried down with it if it fell.³² But how and why can a belief be 'carried down' by another, and what is meant by being 'carried down' here? The answer clearly cannot be psychological: even if, because of my chronic lack of self-confidence, I cannot believe that my life is worth anything unless *you* think it is, so that abandoning the latter belief would 'carry down' the former, this does not show that this belief contributes to the coherence of my belief-system in any relevant sense. The idea Blanshard and other coherentists have in mind can be gleaned from the following passage:

Ask the plain man how he knows that a straight line is the shortest between two points or, what seems to him equally axiomatic, that $2 + 2 = 4$, and he will probably answer that such things wear their truth on their face. But if this were challenged, would he not naturally say something like this: 'So you doubt, do you, that a straight line is the shortest line? But you can't really live up to such a doubt. If a straight line isn't the shortest, why do you cut across a field? Why are roads built straight? For that matter, is there anything we have been taught to believe about space and motion that wouldn't have to be given up if we gave up belief in the axiom? As for the $2 + 2$ example, it is really the same thing again. Try making the sum anything but four, and see where it takes you. If $2 + 2$ were 5, $1 + 1$ would not be 2, and then 1 would not be 1; in fact not a single number, or relation between numbers, would remain what it is; all arithmetic would go.' This is the sort of defence, I think, that the plain man would offer; at any rate he would recognize it as reasonable if offered by someone else. And that means that his certainty does not rest on self-evidence merely. He is appealing to the coherence of his proposition with an enormous mass of others which he sees must stand or fall with it.³³

These examples make clear, I think, that the notion Blanshard is appealing to is one of *reason-giving*-, that is, abandoning one belief 'carries down' another if, in order to have any (or any sufficient) reason to believe the latter as opposed to its negation, one needs to believe the former. Thus, if you gave up believing that a line was the shortest distance between two points, you would have no reason for thinking that the quickest way to get across the field was to go straight, rather than (for example) in a curve; or if you gave up believing $2 + 2 = 4$, you would have no reason to believe $1 + 1 = 2$ rather than something else. So, the test of coherence for a belief, of

³² Blanshard, *The Nature of Thought*, ii. 227.

³³ Ibid. 244.

whether I can 'reconcile the fact of its error with my accepted world',³⁴ concerns whether that belief is logically or epistemologically required to permit me to retain those propositions that constitute my belief-system. As I see it, then, according to the coherentist of this sort, a belief is justified if the proposition believed could not be rejected without reducing the coherence of that system (its cohesiveness, consistency, or comprehensiveness), where that reduction would come about because of the connections between that belief and others in the system, in so far as giving up that belief would have implications regarding my reasons for holding them.

Now, clearly, there is a large variety of ways in which such connections may exist in my belief-system, and thus a variety of ways in which the coherentist can apply his criterion and claim that belief *A* impacts on the system as a whole. In Blanshard's examples given above, the relations are straightforward enough: in the case of my belief about a line being the shortest between two points, this just *is* my reason for going straight across the field, so that the former is directly related to the latter; whilst in the addition case it is clear that the rejection of $1 + 1 = 2$ must follow from the rejection of $2 + 2 = 4$, as the falsity of the one implies the falsity of the other. In such cases, it is hard to see why the coherentist needs anything like a transcendental argument, as the coherence test can be applied to reason-giving interconnections that are unproblematically direct and transparent.

However, not all such interconnections are direct in this way, and in these cases 'investigating the connections between the major structural elements of our conceptual scheme' may require something more like a transcendental argument, to show why and how giving up belief *A* will have an impact on our belief-system. These are cases where (schematically) belief *A* is not *itself* the immediate reason for some other belief *C*, but where it is required as a presupposition for that belief to have the reason it *does* have: that is, for the belief which supports *C* (belief *B*, say) to *be* a reason for believing *C* (for *B* to *rationalize* it, one might say).³⁵ The transcendental argument is

³⁴ Bradley, 'On Truth and Coherence', 212.

³⁵ This is to be contrasted to cases where one belief is required to make another into a *sufficient* reason to believe something else (e.g. for my belief that John has written an 'X' in the box to be sufficient reason to believe that John has voted, I may also need to believe that an election is taking place, as otherwise the first belief 'underdetermines' the latter, as there are many conclusions I could reasonably draw from it when taken singly). In the cases I am focusing on, the second belief is required

required to show why belief *A* is required to enable belief *B* to rationalize belief *C*, given which the coherence test can then be applied to *A* and used to justify it.

This pattern may be briefly illustrated with two examples. The first concerns the Principle of Non-Contradiction, and the question of whether Aristotle's argument for this Principle should be interpreted as a transcendental one. It is possible to argue that Aristotle's intention was to establish this proposition as one that must be accepted for any belief to rationalize any other, and thus for a coherent belief-system to exist at all.³⁶ On this view, a transcendental argument is needed because the aim is to establish, not that the Principle is *itself* a reason for believing anything, but is something we are required to believe if what we believe is to be a reason for believing anything else: or, as Leibniz put it, 'one cannot be prevented from presupposing the principle, if one wants to reason at all'.³⁷ The coherentist can then go on to use this conclusion to justify acceptance of the Principle in coherentist terms.

In this case, the impact of the belief on the nature of our belief-system is said to be total; but this is not essential, and is not a feature of my second example, namely our belief that people can act freely. In this case, the coherentist might again try to show that this belief is justified, by considering (in Blanshard's words) 'the extent of our accepted world that is implicated with it and would be carried down with it if it fell'. Now, it could be claimed that without this belief we would not be able to hold on to our beliefs concerning moral responsibility, and thus our whole system of moral judgements depends upon it. If this is so, however, it is not because this belief figures *directly* as a reason for making such judgements about people; rather, it is arguably more like a necessary presupposition for making cogent the reasons we do use, and so serves as a legitimating background belief that is required for our practice of moving from judgements about people's actions to their moral standing. On this view, therefore, a transcendental argument is required to show

before the first belief can be a reason to believe the third *at all*, where this claim is therefore made not on the basis of possible counter-alternatives (as above), but on what *makes* the first belief into a reason for the third one.

³⁶ For a recent account of Aristotle's position along these lines, see T. H. Irwin, *Aristotle's First Principles* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), esp. ch. 9.

³⁷ Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Die philosophische Schriften*, ed. C. I. Gerhardt, 7 vols. (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1875-90), v. 15.

why such a conception of free will is in fact needed in this way, to make it possible to treat (for example) 'X hit X' as a reason to feel censorious towards X. This argument deserves to be called transcendental, I take it, in large part because it will be based on some sort of *conceptual* claim, regarding the connection between moral responsibility and freedom, showing why the latter is required as a presupposition before we can make judgements regarding the former on the basis we do.

We have therefore seen how coherentism may lead towards the construction of belief-directed transcendental arguments and vice versa. The coherentist needs to show how different beliefs impact on one another, and a belief-directed transcendental argument offers one such demonstration, whilst the proponent of a belief-directed transcendental argument needs to show why this reliance of one belief or set of beliefs on another cuts any justificatory ice, a question the coherence theory can answer. The coherentist transcendental argument strategy would therefore appear to have an advantage over the naturalist one in this regard, even though both employ belief-directed transcendental arguments in the manner advocated by the later Strawson, of 'investigating connections between the major structural elements of our conceptual scheme': for, whereas the naturalist did not relate the results of this investigation to any norm, but instead tried to satisfy us with a demonstration of the 'idleness' of scepticism, the coherentist can make such a normative claim, and so is able to address the question of justification as it is posed.³⁸ We have also suggested in general terms why Kant might have been led towards a coherentist transcendental argument strategy of this sort, as a way of warranting a class of beliefs that lack both standard direct

³⁸ Cf. Pranab Kumar Sen, 'On a Gentle Naturalist's Response to Scepticism', 302-3 (main emphasis mine), where Sen uses such coherentist considerations to move beyond Strawson's naturalistic response to scepticism: 'Now, if the arguments do succeed in showing this interconnection of beliefs and concepts, what more do we need to show that our concepts are valid and that our beliefs are true? I do not think that we need to show anything more than what these arguments are rightly taken by Strawson to do. Our beliefs cannot be supported by things *outside* the domain of our beliefs, something other than beliefs to which we have access independently of all the beliefs that we have. If there is such a thing, there is no such access. It is only our beliefs that we have, and *we are entitled to take them to be true, and also to amount to knowledge, provided they have the right kind of interconnections among themselves* ... So if the arguments offered by different philosophers have established interconnections of beliefs and concepts relating to the external world, they have also at least tended to show that these beliefs are true, and to the extent they have done this they have also tended to show that the skeptic is wrong.'

and inferential justification in their own right, but which none the less might be shown to be required for the reason-giving connections of beliefs within our system to hold together. It now remains to spell out Kant's position here in more detail, particularly in relation to our beliefs regarding causality and the place of such beliefs in our doxastic scheme.

5.3 KANT'S SECOND ANALOGY

In section 5.1, it was argued that the target of Kant's Second Analogy should be taken to be Hume's normativist justificatory scepticism, whereby it is claimed that we have no adequate justification for our beliefs involving the causal relation, and in particular for beliefs that *because A occurred, B had to follow*. Having explained what form this sceptical challenge takes, it now remains for me to put forward a reading of the Second Analogy itself that reflects the sort of coherentist transcendental argument strategy I outlined in the previous section.

As I have already observed, some sort of coherentist approach has obvious attractions in dealing with the problem of justifying beliefs of this type. For the difficulty is to avoid the dilemma Hume poses, of asking us to show that the belief is *either* directly justified by perception or self-evidence, *or* indirectly justified as a result of inference from a belief of one or other of these types. Hume argues that the former route fails, because no claim regarding necessity can be justified by appeal to experience, which can only tell us (at best) that *B* has invariably followed *A*, but not that this relation is necessary or uniform; and nor is it self-evident as any sort of analytic claim. Now, as we have seen, Kant accepts that both horns of the dilemma hold, and so accepts that this kind of belief cannot be justified by appeal to experience on the one hand or self-evidence on the other. In one sense, therefore, Kant's position is as radical as Hume's; but he does not weaken the necessitarian view of causation he is seeking to uphold, whilst accepting the Humean view that this blocks the obvious justificatory routes that might standardly be used.

None the less, on a coherentist reading, Kant avoids normativist scepticism here by seeking a middle way through the dilemma Hume poses, in offering a justification for these beliefs in coherentist terms, which then allows him to treat them as non-inferentially

justified, but in a way that does not involve an appeal to experience or self-evidence. Thus (in Ewing's words) Kant's strategy is to show that 'the ultimate proof of causality is constituted by the fact that without it we could have no sort of coherent system of judgements about events in time'; that is, Kant employs a transcendental argument to show that our belief that the relation is necessary underpins that part of our belief-system concerning the temporal ordering of states of objects, and thus of changes in objects, and thus of events, thereby demonstrating that such causal beliefs are fully justified in coherentist terms, once the effect of giving them up is considered. In this way, the Second Analogy shows on coherentist grounds that our conception of the causal relation has considerable warrant, in so far as (in Blanshard's terms) large parts of our 'accepted world' (our body of beliefs) are 'implicated with it', and would thus be 'carried down with it if it fell', showing that this conception passes the Bradleyan 'test of system' which the coherentist takes as his criterion of justification.

Kant's argument to this effect, regarding the causal relation, is presented in the Second Analogy as follows. Kant begins from a conception of an event as the coming into existence of a new state of an object over time:³⁹ thus, a body changing from being cold at t_1 to being warm at t_2 is an event, as is a ship altering its position (to cite two of Kant's well-known examples). Now, Kant's starting assumption is that 'time . . . cannot itself be perceived':⁴⁰ that is, we cannot tell, just by looking, whether one state of the thing perceived is temporally before or after the other. The problem this raises is how I can then have any reason for forming the belief I do, about what event has occurred (the body has gone from being cold to being hot, rather than vice versa; the ship has moved downstream and not upstream), given that I cannot 'read off' the temporal order of the states of the object just by perceiving these states themselves, as this temporal order is not thereby given; for I cannot infer that the object has gone from state S_1 to S_2 just from the fact that these two states occupy distinct times, when nothing about those times tells me which is prior to which (what time it is as part of some objective temporal order). Nor can I base this inference on the *subjective* order of my experiences, i.e. on the fact that I perceived the object in the former state before I perceived it in the latter state, because (as Kant

³⁹ Cf. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A191/B236.

⁴⁰ Ibid. A117/B219.

famously argued) *all* perception is successive, even that of an *unchanging* object, so that this fact tells us nothing. So, we cannot appeal either to time itself (as it were), or to our subjective order of experiences, to determine what the order is in which the object perceived possessed these two states, alteration in which constitutes the event; and thus we cannot appeal to either as a way of deciding what category of event it is that we are experiencing (the body getting hot or cold; the ship moving downstream or upstream).

Kant then argues that, if my belief is to be supported, it must be by reference to some sort of causal claim, whereby I infer that the object has gone from S_1 to S_2 by appealing to causal considerations: so, my basis for believing that the body has gone from being cold to being hot, and not the other way round, is that it has been acted upon by the sun, which has the effect of warming things up rather than cooling them; likewise, my basis for believing that the ship has moved downstream, and not upstream, is that the ship has been acted upon by the wind, tide, etc., which has the effect of pushing the ship one way rather than another. Thus, Kant argues, the basis for our judgements concerning the temporal order of states of objects undergoing change is an inference from other objects and events that we take to be causally related to the former; but, if we lacked the prior belief that a cause must always bring about the same change of state in the object it effects, we could not use this causal relation to make any judgement about what had occurred, as the latter would not then provide any grounds by which to fix the former (for example, unless we thought that the sun *uniformly* has the capacity to heat things and not to cool them, we could not then use the fact that the sun acted on something to determine the temporal order of the change we have experienced, and thus to fix the type of event that has occurred). The belief that objects have uniform causal powers, and thus that if one acts on another, a particular change will always follow, is thereby shown to underpin (by giving us reason for) the system of judgements we make concerning the nature of events, and thus to have a crucial role in making our belief-system coherent in this way.

Textual support for this reading appears to come from passages such as the following:

Let us suppose that there is nothing antecedent to an event, upon which it must follow according to rule. All succession of perception would then be

only in the apprehension, that is, would be merely subjective, and would never enable us to determine objectively which perceptions are those that really precede and which are those that follow. We should then have only a play of representations, relating to no object; that is to say, it would not be possible through our perception to distinguish one appearance from another as regards relations of time. For the succession in our apprehension would always be one and the same, and there would be nothing in the appearance which so determines it that a certain sequence is rendered objectively necessary. I could not then assert that two states follow upon one another in the [field of] appearance, but only that one apprehension follows upon the other, that is something merely subjective, determining no object; and may not, therefore, be regarded as knowledge of any object, not even of an object in the [field of] appearance.

If, then, we experience that something happens, we in so doing always presuppose that something precedes it, on which it follows according to a rule. Otherwise I should not say of the object that it follows. For mere succession in my apprehension, if there be no rule determining the succession in relation to something that precedes, does not justify me in assuming any succession in the object. I render my subjective synthesis of apprehension objective only by reference to a rule in accordance with which the appearances in their succession, that is, as they happen, are determined by the preceding state. The experience of an event is itself possible only on this assumption.⁴¹

There are several points to be made in relation to this passage. First, Kant puts the sceptical problem in terms of justification, and what must be assumed in order to make a judgement about events warranted; this point is put most clearly in the first three sentences of the second paragraph. Secondly, Kant's emphasis throughout seems to be on the causal *relation*, and how far this must be taken to be fixed or rule-governed, rather than on the causal principle. Thirdly, despite the final sentence, it seems clear that Kant means to be talking about what entitles us to *judge* that a particular event has occurred, rather than what enables us to *apprehend* an event directly, so that we are dealing with a doxastic rather than phenomenological issue.

Now, as Kant himself immediately observes in the paragraph following those given above, this claim regarding the necessary *presuppositional* status of causal judgements to our system of beliefs 'may seem to contradict all that has hitherto been taught in regard to the procedure of our understanding',⁴² where it was taken for

⁴¹ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A194-5/B239-40.

⁴² Ibid.

granted (most obviously by Hume) that judgements regarding the nature of an event can be made first, and that causal judgements are therefore based on the latter. By claiming that this order of priority is incoherent, as in fact the latter can be shown to presuppose the former, Kant undercuts any inferential account of causal beliefs, replacing it with a non-inferential coherentist picture, according to which their justification comes from the way in which they make it possible to include judgements about events within our conception of the world. In this way, the game played by the sceptic is again turned against itself, in so far as the sceptic's attempt to show that the notion of necessity is derived illegitimately from our identification of events and their regularities begs the prior question of how events themselves come to be identified; and, once this question is answered, it can be used to show that our belief can be given more warrant than the sceptic supposed.

I do not wish to claim that the interpretation of the argument of the Second Analogy given above is itself particularly original or even controversial. Several commentators have seen in one way or another that Kant's aim is to show that, unless we already supposed that causal laws obtained, we could not legitimately make judgements concerning the nature of events (that is, changes in objects) at all.⁴³ Where I wish to depart from most commentators, however, is in arguing that this transcendental claim needs to be put in a coherentist context to do real anti-sceptical work, and to argue this can best be done by taking Kant's target to be a form of normativist justificatory scepticism, to which we have provided a perfectly adequate and defensible response.

5.4 OBJECTIONS AND REPLIES

In this section, it now remains for me to consider various objections that might be made to the reading of Kant's Second Analogy I have adopted, and to the position I take it to represent.

⁴³ This basic approach can be found in Arthur Melnick, *Kant's Analogies of Experience* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1973), and is developed further in Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge*. One important difference between the two is that Guyer stresses how far Kant's argument focuses on the problem of determining the sequence of states that make up an event, rather than the sequence of events themselves, and hence on the need to separate these two problems (see *ibid.* 447-8 n. 11). I think Guyer is right to emphasize this point, and have followed him in concentrating on the former issue rather than the latter one.

5.4.1 Causality as a constitutive principle

The first objection is essentially interpretative: namely, that, as I have presented Kant's position, the concept of causality looks too much like what Kant meant by a regulative idea or principle, when it is supposed to be constitutive. I do not think this is the case, however. As I understand it, this contrast is as follows: whereas Kant held that, with regard to constitutive principles, we might intelligibly come to believe that they are true, with regard to regulative principles, this is not so, in so far as we cannot conceive of acquiring adequate grounds for them. Thus, Kant argues, if we are to make use of regulative principles, they must be treated as unverifiable (and unfalsifiable) postulates, whose value consists in their role in guiding our inquiries, whilst to perform this role we may have a *psychological* need to act *as if* they were true.⁴⁴ Now, given this account of the constitutive/regulative distinction, I can still claim that the causal beliefs are constitutive for Kant,⁴⁵ in the sense that we *do* have a reason for taking them to be true precisely because they underpin important parts of our belief-system, in that giving them up would render the latter less coherent. The mistake here is to think that because these presuppositional beliefs may be likened to *hypotheses*, as being assumed at the outset of inquiry, that in itself makes them regulative; for when Kant talks of regulative ideas as being hypothetical, he means they are assumed as the possible (but unattainable) *goal* of inquiry, not as something that forms the conceptual basis for our belief-system from which we start.

5.4.2 Kant's response to Hume as an argument from indispensability

The second objection I wish to discuss concerns the emphasis I have placed on Kant's argument as designed to show that causal judgments involving necessity are basic to our belief-system, in so far as they are required in order for that system to contain beliefs about the temporal determination of events. The objection here is that this

⁴⁴ Cf. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A616-17/B644-5 and A647/B675.

⁴⁵ Confusingly, perhaps, Kant at one point *himself* calls the principle of causality *regulative*: see *Critique of Pure Reason* A178-81/B221-5. It is clear from the context, however, that Kant is here using the regulative/constitutive distinction in a different way, when applying it to concepts of the understanding. On this, see Graham Bird, *Kant's Theory of Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 1962), 70-1.

line of interpretation is misguided, in so far as the conclusion we have arrived at is one that Hume himself could easily have accommodated with little difficulty. An objection along these lines can be found in a recent response to Guyer by Wayne Waxman:

Had Kant been ready to content himself with so patently fictitious a species of 'objectivity', he need never have sought an alternative to Hume's account. Hume never questioned the indispensability of the principle of cause and effect to our thought of objects; indeed, he deemed it so essential to all reasoning regarding matters [of fact] that he thought that upon its removal, 'human reason must immediately perish and go to ruin'. He opposed only the inference, common among philosophers, from the indispensability of the principle of cause and effect for our thought of objects to its necessary (or even possible) validity in respect of the objects themselves: 'Obscurity and error begin then to take place, and we are led astray by a false philosophy . . . when we transfer the determination of the thought to external objects, and suppose any real intelligible connexion betwixt them; that being a quality which can only belong to the mind that considers them.' Therefore, for Kant actually to refute Hume, he needs to show nothing less than that the objects themselves (Hume's perceptions, Kant's appearances), insofar as they belong to a single, unitary sensibility, are subject to the universal law of cause and effect; epistemic utility, even indispensability, is simply not enough.⁴⁶

As well as arguing that Hume would have seen no difference between his own position and that defended by the Second Analogy as I have interpreted it (and so concluding that this interpretation must be wrong), Waxman also draws attention to a passage in the *Prolegomena* to reinforce this point, where Kant contrasts his response to Hume from that offered by the Scottish 'common-sense' school, who are said not to have recognized that Hume 'never held in doubt' that 'the concept of cause is correct, useful, and in respect of all knowledge of nature indispensable',⁴⁷ implying that a mere insistence on the latter point is therefore inadequate as a critical response to the problem Hume raised.

While I think Waxman's point here deserves to be taken seriously, and that the passage from the *Prolegomena* should give us pause, I

⁴⁶ Wayne Waxman, 'What are Kant's Analogies About?', *Review of Metaphysics*, 47 (1993), 63–113, p. 96. The first quotation from Hume is from the *Treatise*, book I, part IV, § 4, p. 225, and the second from the *Treatise*, book I, part III, § 14, p. 168.

⁴⁷ See Kant, *Prolegomena*, iv. 258, trans. Gray Lucas, p. 7.

think his reservations are not decisive, for the following reasons. First, while there are similarities between Hume's acceptance that causal judgements are indispensable and Kant's coherentist argument (on my interpretation), there are also important differences: most significantly, that Hume's argument is *naturalistic*, in emphasizing that such judgements are 'unavoidable in human nature' in a psychologists' sense,⁴⁸ whilst Kant's argument (again, on my interpretation) has no such naturalistic underpinning (hence its status as a *transcendental* argument, concerning the rational structure of our belief-system, rather than its psychological basis). Secondly, it would be wrong to understand the role of coherentist considerations here in purely *pragmatic* terms (as Waxman's talk of 'epistemic utility' might suggest); for, as Ewing emphasized in a passage already cited,⁴⁹ the coherentist norm does not rest on a consideration of the 'practical consequences' of giving up some belief or beliefs of a certain type. Thus, for both these reasons, the Kantian coherentist can allow that, while Hume may acknowledge the indispensability of causal beliefs in *some* sense, this is not the sense required by his non-naturalistic, non-pragmatic conception of coherentism, so some further argument (along the lines of the Second Analogy) is still needed. Thirdly, and finally, if we distinguish between a naturalistic indispensability argument and a coherentist argument in this way, we can allow that Kant may indeed have seen the Scottish common-sense response to Hume as inadequate (in setting out to prove just the sort of psychological and pragmatic indispensability Hume himself took to be the only justification for our concept of causality that could be given), whilst still holding that Kant's non-psychological, non-pragmatic coherentist justification requires us to establish claims regarding this concept and our norms legitimating it which Hume did *not* take for granted or acknowledge (as he arguably *did* take for granted and acknowledge those pressed on him by the Scottish common-sense school).

It might be said, however, that the passage Waxman cites from the *Prolegomena* is still problematic for my reading of the Second Analogy, because what it shows is that Kant took the Humean naturalistic indispensability argument to be *sufficient* to justify us in making causal judgements, so that, if Kant's Second Analogy is answering a 'question' raised by Hume, the question of justification

⁴⁸ Hume, *Treatise*, book I, part IV, § 4, p. 226.

⁴⁹ See above, p. 194.

isn't it. In view of the significance it may appear to have in this respect, it is worth quoting this passage in full:

Hasty and incorrect as was [Hume's] conclusion [namely, 'that there is no metaphysics at all, and cannot be any'], it was at least founded on enquiry, and this enquiry surely made it worth while for the best brains of his time to have come together to solve the problem in the sense in which he expounded it, if possible more happily, and out of this a complete reform of the science [of metaphysics] must soon have arisen.

But fate, ever unkind to metaphysics, decreed that he should be understood by nobody. One cannot observe without feeling a certain pain, how his opponents *Reid*, *Oswald*, *Beattie* and finally *Priestly*, so entirely missed the point of his problem. By always taking for granted what he was doubting and on the other hand proving, with violence and often with great unseemliness, what it had never entered his mind to doubt, they so mistook his hint as to how to improve matters that everything remained as it was, as if nothing had happened. The question was not whether the concept of cause is correct, useful, and in respect of all knowledge of nature indispensable, for this *Hume* had never held in doubt; but whether it is thought *a priori* by reason, and in this way has an inner truth independent of all experience, and hence also has a more widely extended usefulness, not limited merely to objects of experience; this was the question on which *Hume* expected enlightenment. He was only talking about the origin of this concept, not about its indispensability in use; once the former were determined, the conditions of its use and the extent of its validity would have been settled automatically.⁵⁰

Now, once Kant's remarks are put in context, I think it can be seen that they do not have quite the force suggested by the objection we are now considering. Kant's central complaint against the Scottish common-sense school is that they took Hume to be a sceptical philosopher and focused on just this issue, and so missed the implications of Hume's position for how far metaphysics is possible, and the question whether concepts like cause can have 'a more widely extended usefulness, not limited merely to objects of experience'. For Kant, this oversight was particularly foolish in their case because, by *their* criteria of what justifies the use of a concept like cause, they had no reason to read Hume *as* a sceptic in this way, as Hume's answer to the question of justification (and thus his grounds for thinking that 'the concept of cause is correct, useful, and in respect of all knowledge of nature indispensable') was much like their own, namely that

⁵⁰ Kant, *Prolegomena*, iv. 258-9, trans. Gray Lucas, pp. 7-8.

it was 'unavoidable in human nature'. But, in making these points, it of course does not follow that *Kant* took such a naturalistic indispensability argument as sufficient to answer the question of justification Hume had raised, just that the common-sense school should have been satisfied with it; in taking Hume to be a sceptic, therefore, they needed to depart from their own purely naturalistic response to the question of justification, as Kant himself was able to do (we have argued) in adopting a coherentist transcendental argument strategy.

This last point on the distinction between coherentist and naturalistic transcendental argument strategies also relates to a debate to be found in recent literature on the Second Analogy, concerning how far it should be read as contributing to what Strawson once dismissed as 'the imaginary subject of transcendental psychology',⁵¹ in offering some sort of a priori investigation into how our various psychological capacities relate to one another: for example, how it is that 'the recognition of temporal position depends on interpreting the world causally'.⁵² Against this approach, others (such as Guyer) have argued that the Second Analogy should be 'understood not as a psychological model of the generation of beliefs but as an epistemological model of the confirmation of beliefs'.⁵³ Now, on the kind of coherentist reading I have adopted, Guyer is substantially correct, though not for the reasons he gives.⁵⁴ For, as we have

⁵¹ Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense*, 32. Strawson's scepticism here may be contrasted with the following: 'The *Critique of Pure Reason* is Kant's account of experience ... Kant does not deal with the production of knowledge epistemologically, that is, as though it presented us mainly with problems of justifying what we believe or claim to know. His theory is explanatory rather than justificatory. The problem as he sees it is to discover the essential elements and processes of cognition' (Gordon Nagel, *The Structure of Experience* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1983), p. vii).

⁵² Kitcher, *Kant's Transcendental Psychology*, 179.

⁵³ Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge*, 258.

⁵⁴ Guyer takes the view he does because he thinks it provides a way out of a circularity problem which he presents as follows: 'This is the charge that insofar as Kant's final refutation of idealism turns on the necessity of causal inferences in subjective time-determination it involves a vicious circle, for it requires that empirical consciousness of subjective succession depend upon knowledge of the causal powers of external objects but also, presumably, assumes that such causal knowledge must be generated by an induction from subjective successions, since it is not itself *a priori* (B165)' (Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge*, 315). Patricia Kitcher puts the problem more briefly: 'We cannot recognize temporal relations unless we appeal to causal rules, but how could we establish causal rules unless we can recognize temporal relations?' (Kitcher, *Kant's Transcendental Psychology*, 177).

observed previously, the coherentist claim that some beliefs are dependent on others takes this dependence to be constituted by essentially *reason-giving* relations of rational support and justification, rather than psychological ones. Guyer is therefore right, on this reading, to stress that, for Kant, 'to call a principle a condition of the possibility of experience is to say no more and no less than that it is a necessary condition for the *justification, verification or confirmation* of the judgements about empirical objects that we make on the basis of our representations of them'.⁵⁵ To put this in coherentist terms: Kant's argument that a particular view of the causal relation is required to make our judgements about events possible is based on the claim that this is required in a *normative* sense, in order to *rationalize* these judgements, *not* in order to make these judgements possible in merely psychological terms.

5.4.3 Coherentism and idealism

Another objection that could be raised concerns my general claim to have interpreted Kant's use of transcendental arguments in such a way as to avoid any objectionable idealist commitments, by suggesting that no such commitments are required if all the sceptic demands is some justification for our problematic beliefs, which is then supplied on coherentist grounds by demonstrating the coherence-giving nature of these beliefs to our system of judgement and experience. Following from this account, it may be said that what is characteristic of Kant's transcendental idealism is little more than the recognition, common to most coherentist accounts of justification, that, whilst our system of beliefs is coherent, it still may be that these beliefs do not correspond to how things actually are. I hope to have shown how Kant's acceptance of this possibility, whilst puzzling *vis-à-vis* epistemic scepticism, is perfectly permissible against a justificatory sceptic like Hume, whose scepticism is not of this order.

At this point, however, it might be argued that this attempt to deny that idealistic commitments are required in such an approach is deeply suspect, for any such coherentist picture of justification must be based on a coherence theory of truth, and this itself must be grounded in some sort of idealism. As Ralph Walker puts the latter point, 'since the coherence theory holds that truth consists in

⁵⁵ Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge*, 246.

a relationship of coherence amongst our beliefs, and not in correspondence with a reality independent of beliefs, it is not surprising that many coherence theorists have held that reality is ideal, in the sense that it is our minds' creation'.⁵⁶ Thus, it might be argued, the view of transcendental arguments that I have put forward is no more free of idealist implications than any other.

Now, I will not attempt to question Walker's suggestion that 'every coherence theorist [of truth] must (if he is to be consistent) be an idealist'.⁵⁷ The prior issue, however, is whether the move from a coherentist theory of justification to a coherence theory of truth is one we are required to make.⁵⁸ Walker himself suggests that we *are* required to make it, if our position is to be properly anti-sceptical, for only the latter can really allow us to establish the truth of our beliefs in such a way as to put this truth beyond Cartesian doubt.⁵⁹ As I hope to have shown, however, the account I have given is intended to be anti-sceptical in a rather different sense: the aim is *not* to rule out (conclusively) the possibility that all our beliefs might be false, but rather to challenge the sceptic who will allow that this is not enough in itself to show that none of our beliefs are *justified*, and who then offers *further* reasons to challenge this claim to justification. These further reasons are thus not of the Cartesian sort, for the justificatory sceptic is prepared to accept that even if all our beliefs are mistaken they may still be justified, for justification is here viewed as perspectival, subjectivist, or internal: it is enough for a

⁵⁶ Ralph C. S. Walker, *The Coherence Theory of Truth* (London: Routledge, 1989), 19-

⁵⁷ Ibid. 40.

⁵⁸ Some may adopt this view on the grounds that just this move was made by the British Idealists I have been appealing to here: cf. Mark Sacks, 'Transcendental Arguments and the Inference to Reality', 75 n. 10: 'The British Idealists of course had no qualms about combining a coherence theory of justification with a coherence theory of truth . . . The problem arises only when Stem uses the coherence account of justification but tries to prise it apart from this idealism.' However, the issues here are more complex than Sacks suggests; for while it appears that Blanshard (for example) may have held a coherence theory of truth, it is now becoming orthodox to argue that Bradley (for example) did not: cf. W. J. Mander, *An Introduction to Bradley's Metaphysics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 37-8: 'By far the greatest number of people have thought that Bradley held a coherence theory of truth ... [This opinion] is supported by the fact that a careless reading might well give this impression. But the real situation is quite otherwise. The fact of the matter is that nowhere does Bradley say that truth *consists* in coherence. For Bradley this is the *criterion*, not the nature, of truth.'

⁵⁹ Cf. Walker, *The Coherence Theory of Truth*, 7-12, 171-2.

belief to be justified, that it conforms to our own norms for such justification. The Humean, as I have presented him, accepts this starting-point, but then shows how these norms do not properly apply in the cases he raises; to answer him, then, it is enough to show that by misconstruing the nature of the beliefs in question and their relation to our belief-set, he has overlooked the way in which a different set of norms (coherentist rather than inferential) can here be applied. I would suggest that there is nothing in *this* anti-sceptical project that requires a coherentist theory of truth; all it requires is the claim that the kind of coherentism I have described does form part of a system of justificatory norms and so can be applied in the way I have outlined.

5.4.4 Coherence as a doxastic norm

A final objection to be considered, therefore, is what grounds there are for taking the view that coherence *is* a doxastic norm, in the sense that appeal to the 'claim of system' is an acceptable way of justifying a belief within our doxastic practice, much like the appeal to perception, memory experience, testimony, and so on.

Now, one possible objection to this view can be ruled out as irrelevant here, given that we are targeting a form of normativist scepticism, rather than a reliabilist justificatory sceptic, who holds that any appeal to internal standards of justification must be grounded in a demonstration that these standards are truth-conducive. We discussed the issues raised here at the outset (see § 1.2), and showed how these forms of scepticism can be separated, so that for our purposes we are not here required to deal with the reliabilist issue, even though, in the current literature on coherentism, attempts at providing a reliabilist grounding for these norms have been made.⁶⁰

Beyond this, however, it might be wondered whether coherentism does have any claim to be a norm even in this 'internal' sense, of being one of the principles we accept as determining whether or not a belief is justified. It could be said, perhaps, that the principle of coherence is less *obviously* a norm than that of perception (for example), and that, while any normativist sceptic must be prepared to accept the latter as a norm (in the way that Hume himself does,

⁶⁰ As noted above, attempts of this sort have been made by Bonjour (in *The Structure of Empirical Knowledge*) and Davidson (particularly in 'A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge').

differing from us only on how much it can be used to justify), the sceptic can plausibly question whether coherence constitutes one of our normative doxastic principles at all.

It can certainly be conceded that Hume and other sceptics who have questioned our beliefs in normativist terms have rarely considered coherence as a norm in this way. In this sense, Ewing and Blanshard are right to claim that Kant's originality lies in the way in which he invokes it as a doxastic principle, perhaps for the first time. But of course it is important to the project of answering the doxastic sceptic that it should not seem that Kant or the coherentist are being *revisionary* here, *inventing* a norm that is not already part of our practice, or that does not appear to be implicit in it. How, then, do we make the case that coherence as conceived of in this chapter *does* constitute a doxastic norm, and thus that the principle of coherence can be used to provide justification for a belief alongside other such norms, like those of perception, memory, testimony, and so on?

One option might be to make the case in reliabilist terms, seen not as a *necessary* basis for a doxastic norm, but as a *sufficient* one. Given, however, that we have allowed that such reliabilist grounding is hard to provide without vitiating circularity in relation to other norms, it is difficult to see how it could be made to work here. Another option might be to relate the principle of coherence to some *other* principle of doxastic justification, where the principle of epistemic conservatism is an obvious choice for such a strategy, namely, the principle that *S* is to some degree justified in maintaining a belief simply in virtue of the fact *S*' has that belief.⁶¹ Now, it is clear that connections can be made between these principles, and some coherentists have based their position on a prior commitment to conservatism, along the following lines: given that beliefs are inherently justified (as the principle of conservatism holds), the only reason to give them up is if this is required to make our belief-system more coherent; so, if it can be shown that giving up a particular belief would make the system *less* coherent, and that otherwise it is

⁶¹ Cf. Roderick Chisholm, 'A Version of Foundationalism', in P. A. French, T. E. Uehling, and H. K. Wettstein (eds.), *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, 5 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980), 543-64, pp. 551-2: 'I suggest now an extremely latitudinarian principle. This is the principle that *anything* we find ourselves believing may be said to have *some* presumption in its favor—*provided* it is not explicitly contradicted by the set of other things that we believe.'

justified, then those beliefs that pass the coherence test are justified. I would reject this option, however, for several reasons. First, it is not clear to me that coherentism as conceived by Bradley and others is compatible with conservatism, in so far as conservatism allows that a belief can be justified on its own, given merely that it is believed, where this is no part of the coherentist story and indeed might be thought to be in opposition to the latter's holistic approach. Moreover, it is clear that these coherentists thought of coherence as a *reason* for belief, and thus that it fulfilled a need for such a reason, whereas, if they had accepted conservatism, it is not clear why they should have felt this need existed, if they thought that believing something can be treated as a warrant in itself. Secondly, as a matter of interpretation, none of the coherentists I have discussed seems to have adopted or even considered this principle of conservatism, and certainly none gives any sort of rationale for it, of the sort put forward by its proponents, such as that supposedly provided by consideration of cases of lost evidence.⁶² And thirdly, it is not clear to me that this move has any *dialectical* advantages, in so far as it is no *easier* to defend the principle of conservatism than the principle of coherence,⁶³ so nothing is really gained by attempting to connect the latter with the former. A final option might be to show that *unless* we took coherence to be a norm, we would be left in a radically sceptical position, of having no justified beliefs, in so far as this is really the norm that grounds or legitimates all others. We have already implicitly rejected this option, however, by taking a more pluralist stance, and treating other norms (like perception and self-evidence) as valid in their own right.

In my view, a better way to proceed in arguing the case that coherence constitutes a principle of doxastic justification, to which we are entitled to appeal in answering the normativist sceptic, is to see how far it underlies judgements we make about the rationality of particular epistemic decisions we take or can imagine taking. For the normativist sceptic has been characterized throughout as questioning whether, in forming a belief, we have justification, here 'defined' (in Sosa's words) 'as the correct "application" (by our logic, naturally) of our deepest intellectual procedures'. In proposing

⁶² Cf. Gilbert Hannan, *Change in View* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1986), esp. chs. 4 and 5.

⁶³ For a critique of this principle, see David Christensen, 'Conservatism in Epistemology', *Nous*, 28 (1994), 69-89.

coherence as a norm, we therefore need to show that it constitutes one of 'our deepest intellectual procedures', which we can only presumably do by examining our practices, and seeing whether it is a principle we indeed implicitly use in taking beliefs to be justified. The coherentist who is a monist about norms would need to show that it is the *only* principle we use in this way; but we have rejected such monism. For us, therefore, it is sufficient to show that it is a principle we use in relation to *some* sorts of belief, though not all (where other norms may be used instead).

Now, given that this pluralist approach is adopted, it will be plain that examples of the use of coherentist principles may only relate to *some* types of belief, where those beliefs do not fit other norms, such as the norms of perception, memory, testimony, self-evidence, and so on. Thus, in the case of my belief that 'This is a chair', one may easily feel that the 'intellectual procedure' by conformity to which this belief is justified has nothing to do with the test of coherence and everything to do with the principle of perception. Clearly, then, the area in which the coherentist norm operates will be in relation to beliefs where our acceptance of them cannot be explained in this sort of way (by appeal to norms of perception, memory, self-evidence, or whatever), given the beliefs they are.

One area in which beliefs of this type are perhaps to be found is in ethics, when we consider our beliefs concerning moral principles (such as the Kantian principle, that people should be treated as ends rather than means). In asking how we justify such principles, it is now common to argue that they are not merely self-evident or based on any sort of moral intuition, but that they can be given what justification they have through a process of reflective equilibrium, whereby these principles are shown to provide a reason for believing other, lower-level propositions (for example, it is wrong to lie), which in turn provide reason for believing others at a lower level still (for example, it is wrong for me to deceive John).⁶⁴ The justification for the high-level principle therefore seems to come from the fact that it can be used to provide reasoned support for other moral beliefs, such that, if it were given up, these would have to be

⁶⁴ In contemporary discussion, the idea of reflective equilibrium was first introduced by John Rawls in 'Outline for a Decision Procedure for Ethics', *Philosophical Review*, 60 (1951), 177-97, and then developed in his *Theory of Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972). Rawls refers back to Aristotle and Sidgwick as earlier proponents of this as a method of justification in ethics.

abandoned: hence the claim that, in so far as we accept reflective equilibrium as a way of establishing moral principles as ones we are entitled to believe, we show ourselves to be committed to coherence as a legitimate basis on which to ground a belief.

A further example of where coherentist principles appear to operate is in the justification of what we take *to be* logical laws, where it is shown that acceptance of these laws is fundamental to our belief-system. It could be suggested, of course, that in these cases we are in fact operating with other norms, of which the most plausible is self-evidence; but, as Blanshard argued, the conceivability of alternative logics seems to suggest that they are not self-evident in this way, and thus if we take some laws to hold and others not, it must be a test of coherence that we are using.⁶⁵

It seems, then, as these examples show, the coherentist can point to cases in our thinking where the best way to understand where we take the justification of a belief to come from is to see us as operating with a coherentist norm, and thus that this has a claim to be treated as one of our 'deepest intellectual procedures'. As such, therefore, it appears that it is as legitimate to answer the normativist justificatory sceptic by appeal to this norm as it is to answer him by appeal to any other (perception, memory, and so on), so that the coherentist aspect of this transcendental argument strategy is indeed in good order.

⁶⁵ See Blanshard, *The Nature of Thought*, ii. 240-59.

The Problem of Other Minds

In the previous chapters, we considered a use for transcendental arguments that took as their target a form of normativist justificatory scepticism, which questions whether our belief in the external world and causal necessity can be given any basis that is sufficient (by *our* lights) to confer warrant upon them. In this chapter, it will again be argued that transcendental arguments can most effectively be used when the sceptical problem concerned is conceived of in justificatory, rather than epistemic, terms: that is, as showing that our beliefs about other minds are *rational* or *warranted*, rather than certain or indubitable. It will be claimed that this switch in target allows us to move from providing a truth-directed transcendental argument, to one of a more modest type, but which differs from those discussed in the previous chapters: namely, a transcendental argument that is of a concept-directed form, where it is claimed that the context in which S acquired the capacity to use a certain concept must have been of a particular kind, to make that acquisition possible. The suggestion will thus be that, in addressing the problem of other minds, this type of argument can be used as part of a *modest criteriological transcendental argument strategy*, in response to the justificatory sceptic on this issue.

I will begin by outlining the sceptical issues raised by the problem of other minds, and the strategies that have been developed to meet them (§ 6. i). I will then consider and criticize Davidson's response to this problem, as an example of a foundationalist transcendental argument strategy, designed to refute the epistemic sceptic (§ 6.2). I will then turn to Strawson's response to the problem of other minds in chapter 3 of his *Individuals*, and argue that this response is most effective when read as an example of a modest criteriological transcendental argument strategy, where the target is the justificatory sceptic, who claims that we lack sufficient grounds for our belief in the existence of other minds (§ 6.3).

6.1 THE PROBLEM OF OTHER MINDS AND VARIETIES OF SCEPTICISM

When taken as an epistemic issue, the problem of other minds concerns the claim that the existence of subjects beside ourselves is certain. In these terms, the problem arises because it is supposed that we predicate mental states of others on the basis of their behaviour, but that this behaviour does not provide conclusive evidence for mentality; thus, on the basis of behaviour of this sort, we cannot claim with certainty that other minds exist.

One way of responding to this problem is offered by the logical behaviourist, who argues that propositions about mental states can be analysed into propositions about behaviour, so that for any proposition ascribing a mental state to a person there is a set of purely behavioural statements about that person which entails and is entailed by that proposition, so that relevant behaviour *is* conclusive evidence for mentality. Such a response raises severe difficulties of its own, however, regarding how this analysis is to be achieved, and it is also commonly rejected as counter-intuitive.

Now, logical behaviourism in itself does not require or involve any appeal to transcendental arguments. However, the problems of logical behaviourism are often felt to afflict an approach that does: namely, the kind of transcendental argument strategy which uses a transcendental argument to show that behaviour is a criterion for mentality, where 'criterion' is understood in the strong sense, as standing in an entailment relation to that for which it is a criterion. As we saw previously (§ 3.1.2), a strategy of this sort faces a dilemma: if, *qua* criterial evidence, behaviour is *not* taken to logically entail mentality, then it is hard to see how we can satisfy the epistemic sceptic that we can correctly infer from behaviour to mentality, and thus that the former is conclusive evidence for the latter; but if behaviour *is* taken to logically entail mentality, then it would seem to lead to logical behaviourism.¹ In view of these difficulties, I will not discuss this version of the criteriological transcendental argument strategy any further in relation to epistemic scepticism. Another option, as we saw in § 3.1.2, is to opt for a slightly weaker

¹ The relations between a criteriological approach to the other minds problem and logical behaviourism are explored in C. S. Chihara and J. A. Fodor, 'Operationalism and Ordinary Language: A Critique of Wittgenstein', *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 2 (1965), 281-95.

conception of a criterion, as necessarily good evidence, whereby (if the criterial claim could be established) we would be able to infer that there are at least *some* other minds, given that it is necessary that most cases of behaviour of kind *k* correspond to mentality, and we have observed a sufficiently large number of cases of behaviour of this kind. As we saw earlier, in order to establish a criterial claim of this sort, it would appear we would need to use a truth-directed transcendental argument; we will consider the problems that result below, in § 6.3.

A feature of the approaches so far discussed is that they focus on behaviour in support of their epistemic claims, with the result that they are pushed into trying to show how behaviour in some way constitutes the conclusive evidence we need for mentality, either in particular cases or in general. Another strategy, however, is to argue that better and more conclusive evidence comes from the fact that we ourselves have certain capacities (of thought, of meaningful expression, of self-conscious awareness, for example), for which the existence of others is a necessary condition, so that the former provides deductive support for the latter, but in a way that does not invite any behaviourist difficulties. This approach therefore adopts a foundationalist transcendental argument strategy, incorporating a truth-directed transcendental claim. We will consider an example of this approach in the next section.

It is important to recognize, however, that the issue of other minds presents not only problems for our claims to knowledge in an infallibilist sense, but also problems for our claims to rational or justified belief. For, if the sceptic can show that the only justification we have for our belief in the existence of others is provided by some sort of inductive inference based on our own case, then it appears he can claim that this belief is unjustified, as a piece of poor inductive reasoning that fails to conform to our *own* principles of good inductive practice, and so is 'internally' criticizable in this way. As Wittgenstein famously posed the problem: 'how can I generalize the *one* case so irresponsibly?'² It is precisely this lack of doxastic responsibility that the justificatory sceptic sets out to highlight, by showing how *by our own lights* our evidence for this belief falls woefully short of what our norms deem to be satisfactory.

² Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978), § 293 (p. too).

Now, concerns of this sort are normally directed against attempts to claim that beliefs in other minds are justified by an *argument from analogy*. This argument is supposed to answer the 'question of right', by establishing the legitimacy of our belief, whilst admitting (*pace* the epistemic sceptic) that, as a form of inductive argument, it does not *prove* this belief to be true, or thereby rule out the *possibility* that there are no persons beside oneself in the world. The classic statement of this argument comes from J. S. Mill, who presents it as follows:

I conclude that other human beings have feelings like me, because, first, they have bodies like me, which I know, in my own case, to be the antecedent condition of feelings; and because, secondly, they exhibit the acts, and other outward signs, which in my own case I know by experience to be caused by feelings. I am conscious in myself of a series of facts connected in an uniform sequence, of which the beginning is modifications of my body, the middle is feelings, the end is outward demeanour. In the case of other human beings I have the evidence of my senses for the first and last links of the series, but not for the intermediate link. I find, however, that the sequence between the first and last is as regular and constant in those other cases as it is in mine. In my own case I know that the first link produces the last through the intermediate link, and could not produce it without. Experience, therefore, obliges me to conclude that there must be an intermediate link; which must either be the same in others as in myself, or a different one: I must either believe them to be alive, or to be automatons: and by believing them to be alive, that is, by supposing the link to be of the same nature as in the case of which I have experience, and which is in all other respects similar, I bring other human beings, as phaenomena, under the same generalizations which I know by experience to be the true theory of my own existence. And in doing so I conform to the legitimate rules of experimental inquiry.³

As the last sentence makes clear, Mill's primary concern here is justificatory, not epistemic: that is, he wants to show that this belief in the existence of other persons and their mental states can be adequately (though not conclusively) supported by a process of inductive reasoning. As such, the suggestion is not that this is how we actually form beliefs about others, as a matter of empirical descriptive psychology; it is rather that this is their proper justificatory basis, as a matter of normative epistemology.

³ J. S. Mill, *An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy*, in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, ed. J. M. Robson, 33 vols. (London: Routledge/Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962 —), ix. 191.

As a response to this claim, the normativist justificatory sceptic will then argue that if this *is* our justification for the belief, it is extremely problematic, in so far as it is based on observations taken from a single instance. Normally, enumerative inductive reasoning goes from many particular instances ('Socrates is mortal', 'Aristotle is mortal', etc.) to an inductive generalization ('All human beings are mortal'), from which a conclusion about a new particular instance is inferred ('John is a human being, therefore he is mortal'). In this case, however, the argument proceeds from one instance, namely my own ('When I behave like this, I am in pain') to an inductive generalization ('When anything behaves like this, it is in pain') to a conclusion about a particular case ('John is behaving like this, so he is in pain'). The generalization seems too poorly supported for our conclusion derived from it to be inductively warranted: it is as if someone formed the belief that all human beings are mortal on the basis of seeing one human being die, and from this claimed justification for his belief that John is mortal too.

Now, clearly, one way of responding to the justificatory sceptic here is to look for some *other*, better-formed inductive or abductive argument with which to justify our belief, or indeed to attempt to find a way of shoring up the argument from analogy itself.⁴ I do not wish to rule out such attempts in advance, by claiming that there is some a priori reason why they cannot succeed. None the less, rather than try and meet the inferential problem head on, another possibility is to try to avoid it, by finding some way of showing how the belief is justified without *needing* to appeal to such inductive evidence.⁵ The obvious attraction of proceeding in this way is that it would undercut the ground on which the sceptical worries are built:

⁴ For an influential example of the former option, see Paul Ziff, 'The Simplicity of Other Minds', *Journal of Philosophy*, 62 (1965), 575-94; and for examples of the latter, see Michael A. Slote, *Reason and Scepticism* (London: George Allen & Unwin/New York: Humanities Press, 1970), 111-35, and A. J. Ayer, *The Problem of Knowledge*, 219-22, and 'One's Knowledge of Other Minds', reprinted in his *Philosophical Essays* (London: Macmillan, 1954), 191-214. One other option is to claim that the argument from analogy is enough to show that the belief in other minds at least has *some* justification, though admittedly not much, given the weakness of our evidence for the inductive generalization. This seems unsatisfactory, however, because the sceptic can then point out that our behaviour and attitudes show we do not *really* give this belief the very qualified support we hereby allow it deserves, once more giving evidence of the fact (he will claim) that we do not govern our lives in accordance with rationally grounded considerations.

⁵ Mill announces that an inductive argument is required because (he assumes) 'The most strenuous Intuitionist does not include [the existence of other minds] among the things I know by direct intuition' (Mill, *An Examination*, 190).

because if we have some other, non-inductive means of justifying this belief, then the sceptical claim that we cannot support this belief inductively while following this norm correctly loses its point; for even if we can't, this no longer matters, as inductive support is no longer the issue here.

Now, the most obvious way of carrying out this move is to adopt a phenomenological strategy of the sort we examined in Chapter 4, whereby it is argued that our beliefs here are not based on inference at all, and *a fortiori* not on inductive inference, but are rather in fact grounded in perception. Support for such an approach often comes from those who argue that any attempt to provide an inferential warrant for belief in other minds is misplaced and off-key because, if we feel obliged to resort to an inductive justification here, something has *already* gone badly wrong at a phenomenological level: as in the problem of the external world, if one feels the need to resort to arguments from analogy, arguments from simplicity, or whatever, then one has already lost a proper grasp on the phenomenology of our experience of other people, and of how rich this can be. Commenting on Davidson's emphasis on the need for interpretation in understanding the utterances of others, Stephen Mulhall has put this point as follows:

What we therefore find at the foundations of Davidson's philosophy of language—what, in effect, we need to presuppose in order to make sense of his illicit and otherwise unintelligible use of the term 'interpretation'—is a metaphysics which is most easily expressed in quasi-ontological terms. In order to say anything philosophically instructive or revealing about language, we must assume that when a human being speaks to us, we hear sound-patterns; when he acts we see bare movements. The world we really perceive is radically devoid of any human significance, until we use our interpretative theorizing to organize this primitive data into units of human meaning—words, actions, gestures. Within this generally alien world, we are alienated in particular from language and from human behaviour as a whole, for the significance and the humanity we find in those phenomena of our everyday life are a result of our reading our concepts into the data we directly apprehend. Every language is at root a foreign tongue, every person an alien; a world which requires radical interpretation from its human residents is a world in which they can never be at home.⁶

⁶ Stephen Mulhall, *On Being in the World: Wittgenstein and Heidegger on Seeing Aspects* (London: Routledge, 1990), 104-5. Cf. also Brendan Larvor, 'The Owl and the Pussycat', *Philosophical Quarterly*, 44 (1994), 233-9, PP- 235-6: '[H]ow do we recognize other people? Among the many perceptual judgements that we make are judgements that this bit of matter does not support consciousness whereas that bit does. We make such judgements all the time, without thinking about it. How? Well, we

As Mulhall makes clear, the claim here would be that a less distorted account of what our experience of others is actually like would show that their mentality thereby manifests itself to us directly, and so our beliefs about it can be justified in accordance with a perceptual norm: no indirect, inferential support is required and, in so far as it attempts to provide one, the argument from analogy and other such arguments are misplaced and misconceived.⁷ This then gives us a way of responding to the justificatory sceptic that avoids his criticism of such inductive arguments in this context, by warranting our beliefs in accordance with a phenomenological justificatory strategy.⁸

do not do *ad hoc* Turing tests, nor do we try a bit of radical interpretation and see how we get on. Recognizing other people hardly ever involves a theory of rationality, not even implicitly. We do not learn to recognize human beings, and then (separately) learn that humans are almost always intelligent. We do not perform any inference such as: this is a human being, humans are intelligent, therefore this is intelligent. Someone may wish to claim that we do perform that inference, but so fast that we do not notice, or again perhaps it is a “subconscious inference”. What possible grounds could there be for believing in “subconscious inferences” or “inferences faster than thought” or any other conveniently occult logical processes? Such talk makes no sense at all, and one would only find it tempting if one were in the grip of a powerful and familiar epistemological picture, according to which our knowledge of the world is inferred from some logically basic epistemic data: “sense impressions” or “protocols” or what-have-you. It then seems that our recognition of other people *must* take the form of an inference from the appearance of their bodies to knowledge of their minds; if we are not aware of any such inference, then it must be hidden from us somehow. This is not the moment to rehearse the case against empiricism. It is sufficient to say that there is no need to postulate concealed inferences.

So how do we recognize other people? Well, we just *see faces*, without performing any inference at all. Indeed, “judgement” is a potentially misleading word here because it suggests cognition. In fact it is “natural” for us to see faces in much the same way as it is “natural” for humans to follow the line of a pointed finger, whereas a cat just looks at the fingertip. It is just something we do. Phenomenologically, seeing a face is as immediate and as compelling as seeing a colour. It is almost impossible for a human being to look at another simply as a lump of matter, without seeing the person there. This ought not to be the case if the physical appearance is apprehended directly and the mind recognized later.’

⁷ Cf. Mulhall, *On Being in the World*, 19: ‘A crucial motivation for stressing the aptness of the concept of seeing in these contexts is precisely to underline the sense in which the friendliness of the glance is as directly, as immediately perceived as the colour of the eyes might be thought to be.’ Mulhall is here commenting on the following passage from Wittgenstein: *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*, ed. G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, 2 vols. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), i, § 1102 (p. 193).

⁸ Cf. John W. Cook, ‘Human Beings’, in Peter Winch (ed.), *Studies in the Philosophy of Wittgenstein* (London: Routledge, 1969), 117–51, p. 127: ‘The essential point is that if there is confusion in the idea of an inward, private, identification [of mental states, events, and processes] then there is also confusion in the idea of conceptually skimming off a mental side of our nature, leaving a physical remainder called “the body”. The philosophical idea of a “senseless body” must be dropped. But in

Now, we have already seen in Chapter 4 how an experience-directed transcendental argument can be used as part of such a strategy, to show that *unless* experience were rich enough to make our belief directly warranted in this way, we could not have some other form of experience (e.g. of our *own* mental states), which the sceptic takes for granted. It might therefore be possible to construct a transcendental argument here that parallels the sort of strategy adopted in Kant's Refutation of Idealism (on my interpretation), which shows that, unless we had immediate experience of the mental states of other subjects, and not just of their bodies and behaviour, we could not be in a position to attribute mental states to ourselves.

However, whilst I would not wish to rule out this way of using a transcendental argument to overturn justificatory scepticism here, I wish to explore another option in this chapter. This option is dialectically stronger than the phenomenological strategy, as it is committed to less in the claims it makes about the perceptual content of experience in this respect, claims that have frequently been challenged.⁹

that case we must also reject the idea that when we look at another person we see only a "body", i.e., something which is no more a possible subject of pain or thinking than a stone would be. And finally, in rejecting *that* idea, we eliminate the only grounds of scepticism with regard to other "minds" and in this way eliminate, too, the only source of plausibility of behaviourism. In short, by rejecting the idea of a private identification, we get back our ordinary concept of a living human being. In place of "colourless bodily movements" we now have human actions and reactions; we are back in the world of people running from danger, telling us their woes, nursing painful bruises, grimacing, frowning in disapproval, and so on.' Cf. also John McDowell, 'Criteria, Defeasibility and Knowledge', 472-3: 'The idea of a fact being disclosed to experience is in itself purely negative: a rejection of the thesis that what is accessible to experience falls short of the fact in the sense I explained, namely that of being consistent with there being no such fact. In the most straightforward application of the idea, the thought would indeed be ... that the fact itself is directly presented to view, so that it is true in a stronger sense that the object of experience does not fall short of the fact. But a less straightforward application of the idea is possible also, and seems appropriate in at least some cases of knowledge that someone else is in an "inner" state, on the basis of experience of what he says and does. Here we might think of what is directly available to experience in some such terms as "his giving expression to his being in that 'inner' state": this is something that, while not itself actually being the "inner" state of affairs in question, nevertheless does not fall short of it in the sense I explained.'

⁹ Cf. e.g. Plantinga, *God and Other Minds*, 188-90, and Hacker, *Insight and Illusion*, 313-14. One way of responding to these challenges might be to argue that while we do not have direct awareness of others as being in certain mental states, we do have direct awareness of them as agents, and that this can form the basis of a phenomenological approach. For an interesting transcendental argument strategy along these lines, see Sebastian Gardner, 'Other Minds and Embodiment', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 94 (1994), 35-52.

This option does not have to meet these challenges, as it accepts (against the phenomenological strategy) that all we have to go on in attributing mentality to others is experience of bodily behaviour, which may ground our attribution of mental states, but which does not allow us to experience them directly. However, as the aim is still to undercut the sceptical position, rather than answer it directly, this option still holds (against the inductivist) that these grounds for attributing mentality are enough *in themselves* to warrant our beliefs, without the connection between behaviour and mental states needing to be inductively established, before the former can justifiably be taken as evidence for the latter. In seeking this middle way, this strategy therefore needs to make sense of the idea that behavioural evidence of this sort might warrant attribution of mentality to others, where such warrant does not depend on any prior empirical confirmation of some correlation between behaviour and mentality. This would then avoid the sort of inductive problems raised against the argument from analogy by the justificatory sceptic, and thus show his sceptical claims to be misplaced; for now, behaviour of certain sorts justifies us *in itself* in attributing mental states or personhood to others, so there is no need to make the sort of problematic inference from one's own case that is apparently so objectionable. This strategy (like the phenomenological approach) side-steps the sceptical problem by showing why it should never have been raised, rather than by attempting to answer it directly; but it does so whilst accepting that awareness of other people's mentality is phenomenologically less immediate than one's awareness of one's own, and so abandons a straightforwardly phenomenological approach.

This middle way is of course associated with the notion of a *criterion*, conceived of as *non-inductive justification* in favour of some proposition: that is, if *A* is criterial evidence for *B*, and *S* observes *A*, then *S* is justified in believing that *B* obtains (at least in the absence of further evidence against *B*), *without needing to have observed* the sort of correlation between *A* and *B* that would be required to make the belief inductively justified; whereas if *A* is non-criterial evidence for *B* (a *sign*, or *symptom* of *B*), and *S* observes *A*, then *S* is only justified in believing that *B* obtains, provided *S* knows of some correlation between *A* and *B* that is sufficient to make the belief inductively warranted.¹⁰ This criterial position leaves room for the idea that

¹⁰ For further discussion of this conception of a criterion, and how it differs from other (stronger) conceptions, see above, § 3.2.4.

our belief that *B* obtains is in some way indirect, based on our experience of something else, which constitutes our evidence for *B*, whilst also holding that this can be the case without always requiring some observed correlation to make the inference from evidence to conclusion a rational one; on the contrary, some such inferences can be seen to be rational by just understanding the nature of the belief itself and the concepts it involves. To take a simple example: to be warranted in believing that Manchester United is a good football team on the grounds that it has won the Champions League title, one does not first have to have observed some correlation between facts about footballing greatness and facts about success in the Champions League: one can instead appeal to our conception of what footballing greatness *is*, to explain why success in footballing competitions warrants attribution of this property to a team. This shows that a criterion can serve to warrant a belief independently of considerations of inductive support.

Now, some have lost faith in the notion of a criterion being employed here, and I cannot undertake to defend it fully in this context.¹¹ My claim will merely be a conditional one: that *if* this notion can be made to work, it would show how an evidential relation of this sort is immune to the objection the justificatory sceptic raises, because on this conception, criterial evidence provides justification *in itself* (so to speak), without being dependent on whether inductive support can be used to back it up. Put simply, if I rest my belief that Manchester United are a great team on the fact that they have won the Champions League, then *ceteris paribus* (in the absence of match-fixing allegations etc.) this is enough *in itself* to make my belief justified: I am not required also to appeal to some sort of inductively grounded generalization before I can point to this *as* evidence (e.g. 'All winners of the Champions League have been great teams'), as I would be if the evidence were non-criterial.

It is obviously crucial, if this approach is to be used successfully against the justificatory sceptic, that we find some means of showing that the relation between evidence and propositions believed *is* ¹¹

¹¹ An influential expression of such loss of faith is to be found in Crispin Wright, 'Second Thoughts about Criteria', *Synthese*, 58 (1984), 383-405. It is worth noting, however, that Wright's second thoughts relate to the use of criteria in the context of knowledge, not justified belief: 'For, to stress, recognition of the criteria for *P* cannot, consistently with their defeasibility, be held to constitute knowledge that *P* without contravention of the truism that knowledge entails the truth of what is known' (ibid. 386).

criterial in this way, in the problematic cases: thus, in the case that concerns us here, we must show that behaviour is criterial evidence for personhood and mentality. It is in this way that the criteriological strategy may find a role for a transcendental argument, of a concept-directed sort: for, if a transcendental argument can be employed to show that a concept could only be grasped by a speaker if that concept had its content fixed by being introduced in a certain context, this may tell us something about what evidential relations must be criterial for that concept, and thus what evidence forms a non-inductive justification for beliefs involving it. This schematic suggestion will be made clearer in our discussion of Strawson in § 6.3, where I will present a reading of his position along these lines.

Before elaborating on this approach, however, it is first necessary to make clear in more detail why only this more modest use of transcendental arguments is likely to be successful in relation to the problem of other minds. This will be the aim of the next section.

6.2 DAVIDSON ON OTHER MINDS

In the previous section, we saw how there are difficulties in responding to epistemic scepticism about other minds, if one tries to argue that behaviour is conclusive evidence for mentality, for this would seem to take one in the direction of an unacceptably strong form of behaviourism. One way to avoid this difficulty, however, is to argue in a transcendental manner that such evidence can be found elsewhere, in the fact that we have first-person knowledge, thought, or experience, since (it is claimed) the existence of other people is a necessary condition for this fact. This response to the epistemic sceptic thus takes the form of a foundationalist transcendental argument strategy which begins from an apparently uncontentious or sceptic-proof premise, and attempts to deduce the desired conclusion via a transcendental claim, as follows:

- (1) I am a self-conscious subject, with thoughts, emotions, feelings, etc.
- (2) Only if other minds exist could I be a self-conscious subject.
Therefore
- (3) Other minds exist.

As before, the game played by the sceptic is played against himself, where it is argued that what he takes for granted would not be possible, unless it were the case that the proposition doubted held true.

In the recent literature, an anti-sceptical strategy of this sort has been adopted by Davidson, who uses his own form of externalism to argue that it would not be possible for a creature to have thoughts, unless it lived in a world with other creatures who also had thoughts, so the truth of the latter can be deduced from the fact that I am indeed capable of thinking.¹² Davidson's transcendental claim is based on his account of what it takes for a thought to have content, for which he argues that a process of 'triangulation' must occur, whereby the content of the thought someone is having is 'fixed' by the way in which someone else correlates the responses he makes to something in the world. Thus, Davidson argues that if there were no other people, the content of a single person's thoughts would be totally indeterminate, and he would in effect have no thoughts at all; from the self-evident falsity of the latter as regards ourselves, he therefore deduces the falsity of the former, in a way made clear in the following passage:

What seems basic is this: an observer (or teacher) finds (or instils) a regularity in the verbal behaviour of the informant (or learner) which he can correlate with events and objects in the environment. This much can take place without developed thought on the part of the observed, of course, but it is a necessary condition for attributing thoughts and meanings to the person observed. For until the triangle is completed connecting two creatures, and each creature with common features of the world, there can be no answer to the question whether a creature, in discriminating between stimuli, is discriminating between stimuli at the sensory surfaces or somewhere further out, or further in. Without this sharing of reactions to common stimuli, thought and speech would have no particular content—that is, no content at all. It takes two points of view to give a location to the cause of a thought, and thus to define its content. We may think of it as a form of triangulation: each of two people is reacting differentially to sensory stimuli streaming in from a certain direction. If we project the incoming lines outward, their intersection is the common cause. If the two people now note each

¹² Cf. Donald Davidson, 'The Conditions of Thought', in Johannes Brandl and Wolfgang Gombocz (eds.), *The Mind of Donald Davidson*, Grazer Philosophische Studien, 36 (1989), 193-200, p. 193: 'What are the conditions necessary for the existence of thought, and so in particular for the existence of people with thoughts? I believe there could not be thoughts in one mind if there were no other thoughtful creatures with which the first mind shared a natural world.'

other's reactions (in the case of language, verbal reactions), each can correlate these observed reactions with his or her stimuli from the world. The common cause can now determine the contents of an utterance and a thought. The triangle which gives content to thought and speech is complete. But it takes two to triangulate. Two, or, of course, more.

Until a base line has been established by communication with someone else, there is no point in saying a person's thought or words have a propositional content. If this is so, then it is clear that knowledge of another mind is essential to all thought and all knowledge.¹³

Davidson therefore argues that the mistake the sceptic makes, in common with the Cartesian heritage of which he is part, is in the assumption that it is *possible* to be a lone thinker: his transcendental argument is designed to show that this is not in fact the case, given the constraints on what it takes to have thoughts with content, so that the existence of a single thinking subject entails the existence of others.

As Davidson suggests,¹⁴ his position here might be said to have certain similarities to that put forward in Wittgenstein's Private Language Argument, at least under the interpretation given by Kripke.¹⁵ Kripke takes Wittgenstein as arguing that it is impossible to make sense of what it is to follow a rule correctly, unless this means that what one is doing is following the practice of others who are like-minded: what makes our continuation of some arithmetical rule a case of rule-following at all (for example), is that the community goes on in the same way; so, unless addition were rule-governed as a practice, statements like ' $2 + 2 = 4$ ' could have no meaning. Thus, from the fact that we are able to make such statements meaningfully, the existence of a community of others that 'fix' this rule can be inferred, as a necessary precondition for the former:

If our considerations so far are correct, the answer is that, if one person is considered in isolation, the notion of a rule as guiding the person who adopts it can have *no* substantive content. There are, we have seen, no truth conditions or facts in virtue of which it can be the case that he accords with his past intentions or not. As long as we regard him as following a

¹³ Davidson, 'Three Varieties of Knowledge', in A. Phillips Griffiths (ed.), *A. J. Ayer: Memorial Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 153-66, pp. 159-60.

¹⁴ Cf. *ibid.* 157.

¹⁵ See Saul A. Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982).

rule ‘privately’, so that we pay attention to *his* justification conditions alone, all we can say is that he is licensed to follow the rule as it strikes him. This is why Wittgenstein says, ‘To think one is obeying a rule is not to obey a rule. Hence it is not possible to obey a rule “privately”; otherwise thinking one was obeying a rule would be the same thing as obeying it.’ (§ 202)

The situation is very different if we widen our gaze from consideration of the rule follower alone and allow ourselves to consider him as interacting with a wider community. Others will then have justification conditions for attributing correct or incorrect rule following to the subject, and these will *not* be simply that the subject’s own authority is unconditionally to be accepted.¹⁶

If Kripke is right, unless the sceptic is prepared to admit the existence of this community of fellow-speakers and attribute a capacity for intentional rule-following to them, he cannot make sense of the idea of meaningful thought in his own case.

There are, however, difficulties in attempting to refute the sceptic in this ambitious way, by trying to block any sceptical doubt regarding other minds through this sort of deductive argument.

One focus of concern may not be with the argument itself, but with the presuppositions it seems to involve: namely, a prior move away from a realist, ‘subject-independent’ conception of notions like thought-content, meaning, and rules, in so far as these are not now determined by purely ‘objective’ factors, but by how others take the situation, what they agree to, how they interpret us, and so on. This may lead to the general worry discussed earlier (in § 2.2), that without some move away from a realist picture the transcendental argument cannot be made to work.

A second, and more pressing, worry is also familiar, and concerns the argument itself, and its dialectical difficulties. For, as we have already seen (in § 3.1.1), the general problem for any approach that adopts a foundationalist transcendental argument strategy in this way is that, if the first premise is too ‘thin’, then the transcendental claim looks implausible, while if the first premise is too ‘thick’, it can be rejected by the sceptic. In the other minds case, it may be plausible to say that, if thought and meaning are conceived externalistically, then other people are required to make thought or meaning possible for us; but the sceptic can then open up even our introspective knowledge that we *have* such thought to sceptical doubt. On the other

¹⁶ Ibid. 89.

hand, if we stick to a more internalist conception of thoughts and meaning, with the result that such doubts are blocked, the transcendental claim looks too strong, given that (in externalist terms) such 'apparent thoughts' are deemed to be possible whether or not others (or anything outside us) exist at all.

Now, it might be said that the intuition underlying these arguments is not dependent on any commitment to a particular account of thought, rule-following, and so on, but on a more general claim well expressed in a passage from Collingwood that Davidson cites: namely, that unless we lived in a world that contained other people, and not just inanimate or insentient objects, we could not have existed as self-conscious subjects ourselves:

The child's discovery of itself as a person is also its discovery of itself as a member of a world of persons ... The discovery of myself as a person is a discovery that I can speak, and am thus a *persona* or speaker; in speaking I am both speaker and hearer; and since the discovery of myself as a person is also the discovery of other persons around me, it is the discovery of speakers and hearers other than myself.¹⁷

This claim, it might be argued, is intrinsically plausible, and cannot be accused of any equivocation on the notion of thought, meaning, etc. that the earlier argument seemed to involve.

However, there is once again a familiar difficulty with this response to the sceptic: for, on the face of it, it seems ineffective against sceptical counter-examples, concerning a subject brought up in a world of automata, who behaved exactly as we do, but who lacked any inner life. It is hard to see why, in such a world, where there would be every *appearance* of being other subjects, a creature could not become a subject itself. But then, if it is admitted that the mere appearance of personhood is sufficient to constitute a condition for the origins of subjectivity, how can this argument satisfy the epistemic sceptic, who wants some sort of certainty that others are not merely apparent persons in this way? One possible response, of course, is to move in a reductionist direction, and dispute that personhood *is* anything other than outward behaviour; or, more weakly, to claim that behaviour of this kind entails the existence of particular inner states. But this is then to return to the kind of behaviouristic outlook that we had hoped to avoid, whilst still finding a way of answering the sceptic.

¹⁷ R. G. Collingwood, *The Principles of Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1938), 248; cited by Davidson, 'Three Varieties of Knowledge', 165.

The lesson to draw here, I believe, is that transcendental arguments used in this ambitious manner cannot be made to work without begging the question against the epistemic sceptic. We will therefore turn to a consideration of how they might be used more modestly, against the justificatory sceptic, to see whether the difficulties become less insuperable in this context.

6.3 STRAWSON ON OTHER MINDS

As with other examples of transcendental arguments we have considered, Strawson's response to other minds scepticism is hard to interpret uncontentiously, as it is rather compressed, obscure, and deeply thought, so any reading of it is apt to appear one-sided or inadequate. However, again as with other cases we have considered, difficulties only emerge after one starts to pull the argument apart and analyse its working parts; on a surface reading the point may seem evident enough. The central argument in question is set out as follows (where a P-predicate is a predicate we apply to individuals *qua* persons, and where an M-predicate is a predicate we apply to them and other things *qua* material bodies):

Clearly there is no sense in talking of identifiable individuals of a special type, a type, namely, such that they possess both M-predicates and P-predicates, unless there is in principle some way of telling, with regard to any individual of that type, and any P-predicate, whether that individual possesses that P-predicate. And, in the case of at least some P-predicates, the ways of telling must constitute in some sense logically adequate kinds of criteria for the ascription of the P-predicate. For suppose in no case did these ways of telling constitute logically adequate kinds of criteria. Then we should have to think of the relation between the ways of telling and what the P-predicate ascribes, or a part of what it ascribes, always in the following way: we should have to think of the ways of telling as *signs* of the presence, in the individual concerned, of this different thing, viz. the state of consciousness. But then we could only know that the way of telling was a sign of the presence of the different things ascribed by the P-predicate, by the observation of correlations between the two. But this observation we could each make only in one case, viz. our own. And now we are back in the position of the defender of Cartesianism, who thought our way with it was too short. For what, now, does 'our own case' mean? There is no sense in the idea of ascribing states of consciousness to oneself, or at all, unless the ascriber already knows how to ascribe at least some states of consciousness to others. So he cannot argue in general 'from his own case' to conclusions about how

to do this; for unless he already knows how to do this, he has no conception of *his own case*, or any *case*, i.e. any subject of experiences . . .

The conclusion here is not, of course, new. What I have said is that one ascribes P-predicates to others on the strength of observation of their behaviour; and that the behaviour-criteria one goes on are not just signs of the presence of what is meant by the P-predicate, but are criteria of a logically adequate kind for the ascription of the P-predicate. On behalf of this conclusion, however, I am claiming that it follows from a consideration of the conditions necessary for any ascription of states of consciousness to anything.¹⁸

Strawson, I think, makes it clear enough what his conclusion is meant to be, and his strategy for getting there: his conclusion is the criteriological claim that some behaviour is not a 'sign' of mentality, but a criterion of it, and his argument for this conclusion follows from a transcendental claim, concerning the conditions of the ascription of consciousness to anything, including oneself. Using this strategy, Strawson hopes to show that the sceptical problem concerning other minds can be resolved, for once the transcendental claim is established, it undercuts the premise on which any motivation for the problem depends; in this way, the game played by the sceptic can be turned against himself, in the Kantian manner.

However, questions arise immediately. First of all, what kind of sceptic are we addressing here, and thus what notion of a criterion is Strawson employing? Secondly, what is he taking to be the test of criterionhood, and thus what is he trying to establish to show that behaviour is a criterion for mentality in so far as it passes this test? And thirdly, how is the transcendental claim meant to help him in that demonstration, and what does the claim amount to? These issues are all related, and may best be explored by beginning with the first.

In most readings of Strawson's argument, it is taken for granted that he is addressing the epistemic sceptic; and this in turn has led many to assume that, when he talks of 'logically adequate kinds of criteria', Strawson means that (as one commentator puts it) 'certain behavioural manifestations entail the existence of certain states of mind in the person concerned'.¹⁹ We have already seen (in § 3.1.2) why the behaviourist implications of this entailment conception of a criterion are problematic, and would be rejected by most criterion

¹⁸ Strawson, *Individuals*, 105-6.

¹⁹ D. W. Hamlyn, *The Theory of Knowledge* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1970), 238.

theorists. One critic who sees it would be a mistake to attribute this entailment conception to Strawson is Ayer;²⁰ but he still takes Strawson's target to be the epistemic sceptic.²¹ He therefore reads Strawson as employing a 'good evidence' conception, which would at least entail that there are *some* other minds. For, 'though the liaison between the characteristic outward expression of an inner state and the inner state in question may fail in any particular instance, it is not logically possible that it should fail in all instances, or even in any high proportion of them';²² this logical constraint would be violated, if there were no other minds at all.

On this basis, Ayer takes it that Strawson's intention is to provide the following transcendental argument for this claim:

if there were someone who was invariably mistaken in ascribing states of consciousness to others, whether because there were no other persons in the world or merely because he never encountered any, this would . . . necessarily prevent him from being able to ascribe them to himself.²³

More formally, the structure of Strawson's position on this account may be set out as follows:

- (1) I can ascribe states of consciousness to myself.
- (2) In order to ascribe states of consciousness to myself, I must be largely correct in my ascription of states of consciousness to others on the basis of their behaviour.
Therefore
- (3) Behaviour is criterial evidence for mentality.
- (4) I have observed a considerable amount of behaviour in others.
Therefore
- (5) Some other minds exist.

On this view, then, Strawson is taken to be employing a truth-directed transcendental argument, the aim of which is not to refute the epistemic sceptic directly (as on the foundationalist strategy discussed in the previous section), but to show that our evidence is

²⁰ Cf. Ayer, 'The Concept of a Person', in his *The Concept of the Person and Other Essays* (London: Macmillan, 1964), 82-128, p. 95: 'But what exactly is meant here by saying that a criterion is logically adequate? Not that the evidence entails the conclusion, for in that case we should not stop short of physicalism; if a statement about a person's experiences is to follow logically from a statement about physical events, it also must be construed as a statement about physical events.'

²¹ Cf. *ibid.* 105-6.

²² *Ibid.* 100.

²³ *Ibid.* 106.

critical in a particular way, from which the desired conclusion can be inferred.

Now, on this interpretation, the difficulty is to show how Strawson can answer the sceptic in this manner, without being vulnerable to the standard objections to any such truth-directed transcendental argument. It is an objection of this sort that Ayer himself raises, arguing that premise (2) is too strong, via a thought experiment designed to show that someone could learn to ascribe self-consciousness to himself, even in a world of automata, where the subject was universally mistaken in the ascriptions of mentality he made while using behaviour as a basis for that ascription.²⁴ Of course, as we have seen previously, some more recent writers have tried to claim that the nature of belief itself makes global error impossible; but even if the well-known objections to this view can themselves be overcome, we are not considering such global error here, but only error in relation to the mentality of others, and so it is hard to see why this more limited possibility should be excluded. Thus, as we saw in § 3.1.2, if Strawson's argument is taken to be against the epistemic sceptic, we seem obliged to attribute to him one of the strong conceptions of the critical relation, for which he then needs nothing short of a truth-directed transcendental argument if this relation is to be established; but if so, we leave his position vulnerable to the standard criticism of such arguments, in a way that takes us no further forward.

It is suggestive, however, that the transcendental claim that Strawson actually makes is not the truth-directed one attributed to him by Ayer and summarized in premise (2) above, but the concept-directed one that 'there is no sense in the idea of ascribing states of consciousness to oneself, or at all, unless the ascriber already knows how to ascribe at least some states of consciousness to others',²⁵ where (I take it) 'know how to' relates to some sort of capacity, rather than the sort of propositional knowledge that concerns the sceptic. Strawson's claim therefore appears to be the modest one (that I must *possess the capacity* to attribute states of consciousness to others as a necessary condition of possessing the capacity to do so to myself), and not the more ambitious one (of treating the *reliability* of the former capacity as a condition for possessing the latter). Now, we saw previously (in § 3.1.2) that, whilst this sort of concept-directed

²⁴ Ayer, 'The Concept of a Person', 106-7.

²⁵ Strawson, *Individuals*, 106.

argument cannot show that *A* is a criterion for *B* on any of the two strong (epistemic) conceptions of a criterion, it *can* be used to show that *A* is a criterion for *B* on a weaker (justificatory) conception. For this, it is required to establish that unless *S* had grasped how to use '*B*' in a context where *B* was unobservable, he would not have been able to use the term in a context where *B* could be observed directly; and, once it has been shown that the way in which *S* learns to use the concept '*B*' is by reference to *A*, rather than *B* itself (so to speak), the criterion theorist can then claim that *A* constitutes non-inductive justification for beliefs regarding whether *B* obtains. Taken in this way, the aim of Strawson's argument is to cut the ground from under the justificatory normativist sceptic, not by replacing a 'shaky inference'²⁶ with one that is more certain, but by replacing it with one that does not require the sort of inductive support which the sceptic shows to be problematic, in so far as the evidence we are using provides the fundamental application criteria for that concept, and so can be used to uphold our belief in a way that does not raise such inductivist issues.

Taking this to be Strawson's basic strategy, his argument may be outlined as follows:

- (1) If P-behaviour is not a criterion for the ascription of pain, P-behaviour is a *sign* of pain.

That is, if P-behaviour is not the basis on which speakers learn to apply the word 'pain', then if a speaker, *S*, has acquired the capacity to apply it to others, he has done so through inductive inference from their behaviour.

- (2) If P-behaviour is a sign of pain, then the only way *S* could know how to predicate pain of others is by first observing a correlation between pain and behaviour in his own case.

That is, if *S* has to learn how to apply pain to others via inductive inference, then he must have observed some correlation between pain and P-behaviour in himself, at some time (*z*) prior to learning how to identify pain in others.

- (3) But then, before he has established this correlation in his own case, *S* would not have known what conditions were appropriate for predicating pain of others, and thus at this time would only have known how to predicate pain of himself.

²⁶ Ibid. 109.

That is, at $t - 1$, before S had observed some correlation between pain and P-behaviour in himself, he could not have had any way of knowing how to predicate pain of others.

- (4) But, 'a necessary condition of one's ascribing predicates of a certain class to one individual, i.e. to oneself, is that. . . one should have a conception of what those appropriate occasions for ascribing them to [other individuals] would be'.^{27,28}

Strawson characterizes this as a 'purely logical' point, which has since been spelled out by Gareth Evans as follows: 'any thought which we can interpret as having the content *that a is F* involves the exercise of an ability—knowledge of what it is for something to be *F*—which can be exercised in indefinitely many distinct thoughts, and would be exercised in, for instance, the thought that *b* is *F*'²ⁱ

- (5) S does know how to ascribe pain-predicates to himself.

Therefore

- (6) S must have known how to ascribe pain-predicates to others prior to observing a correlation between P-behaviour and pain in his own case.

Therefore

- (7) P-behaviour is not a sign of pain, but a criterion of pain.

That is, the basis on which S learns to apply the word 'pain' cannot be purely by reference to his own case, in relation to the pain *he* feels, but must also be in relation to the third-person case; for, if he did not know how to apply the term 'pain' in this case, he could never have acquired the capacity to ascribe the predicate to himself, for to have *that* capacity, he must *already know* how to apply it to others than himself, if Strawson's 'logical point' is not to be violated. Now, if the 'language-game' of pain ascription depends on S being able to use the term third-personally in this way, in relation to the behaviour of others, then P-behaviour is a non-inductive justification for the belief that someone else is in pain, and so the sceptical problem is dissolved. As Strawson puts it:

it is essential to the character of these [P-predicates] that they have both first- and third-person ascriptive uses, that they are both self-ascribable otherwise than on the basis of observation of the behaviour of the subject of them,

²⁷ Strawson, *Individuals*, 99 n.

²⁸ Gareth Evans, *Varieties of Reference* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 103.

and other-ascribable on the basis of behaviour criteria. To learn their use is to learn both aspects of their use. In order to *have* this type of concept, one must be both a self-ascriber and an other-ascriber of such predicates, and must see every other as a self-ascriber. In order to *understand* this type of concept, one must acknowledge that there is a kind of predicate which is unambiguously and adequately ascribable *both* on the basis of observation of the subject of the predicate *and* not on this basis, i.e. independently of observation of the subject: the second case is the case where the ascriber is also the subject.²⁹

We have now seen how Strawson uses a transcendental claim, given in premise (4) above, to argue that the application-conditions for terms like 'pain' must involve a third-person use, where pain is not directly observed, and not just first-personal ones, where it is. As a result, he claims, some evidence for pain must come to be criterial, and thus some behavioural grounds for believing 'He is in pain' constitute a non-inductive justification for the beliefs. Thus, using a modest (concept-directed) transcendental argument, we have shown how a criteriological strategy can be used to render the concerns of the normativist justificatory sceptic redundant, by showing how our beliefs concerning the mental states of others can be warranted without recourse to any problematic inductive or abductive norms, once the criterial status of the evidence concerned has been established in this way.

One way of bringing home Strawson's point here is as follows. Consider a predicate like 'lazy'. Although laziness can be felt, as a kind of lethargy or weariness, it seems plausible to say that a speaker who did not understand that behaviour of certain kinds is evidence of laziness would not have grasped the concept properly (hence the oddity of a question like: 'I see that John never gets out of bed,

²⁹ Strawson, *Individuals*, 108. Cf. P. M. S. Hacker, 'Other Minds and Professor Ayer's Concept of a Person', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 32 (1971-2), 341-54, P- 350: 'What would be rejected by the defender of the criterial argument is ... that one could, having realized that one is oneself a person, go on to consider *what would count as grounds* for believing that other persons exist, or that there are other states of consciousness (or self-consciousness) than one's own. For the criterial argument claims that meaningful self-ascription of states of consciousness otherwise than on the basis of behavioural manifestations requires that the ascriber possess the relevant concept. This in turn requires that this concept, being one which can be self-ascribed non-criterially, be subject to criterial control, have as part of its meaning a criterial nexus with behavioural manifestation. Hence possession of the concept of the given psychological state requires that one already knows what counts, by necessity, as good evidence for its instantiation.'

but why does that show he is lazy?'); and it then seems correct to say that if a speaker observes behaviour of this kind, no further justification is required for him to attribute laziness to a person, unless something makes the circumstances of the behaviour abnormal (e.g. John is ill or drunk, or chained to the bed). Now, in the case of other predicates, like 'pain', this point may not be so clear, as we are inclined to think that a person could come to understand what 'pain' means by just having the feeling, so that no behaviour would appear to be criterial for the concept in this way. However, it is this inclination that Strawson's argument is designed to challenge, by showing that we *could not* acquire an understanding of any mental concept, even a sensation concept like 'pain', on a purely first-personal basis; and if so, behaviour is as much criterial evidence for a sensation-predicate like pain, as it is for a disposition-predicate like 'lazy'. There is, then, a sense in which the relation between behaviour and mentality is evidential; but it is not evidential in a way that requires any inductive or abductive support to make the inference from behaviour to mentality a legitimate one, so the sceptical worry dissolves and with it the justificatory version of the problem of other minds.

Conclusion

In one sense this book has been an experiment, to see whether, if the standard objections to transcendental arguments are taken to heart and accepted as valid, there is still anything of value in transcendental claims that are modest enough to avoid these objections. Has the experiment produced a positive result? I would like to think so, but four kinds of reason for denying this may remain, and all I can do in conclusion is spell out where and how I hope to have answered them in what has gone before.

The first kind of doubt concerns the rationale for the experiment itself, in so far as some may still feel that the standard objections (outlined in Chapter 2) are answerable, and that nothing need prevent us from taking the 'high road' of using truth-directed transcendental arguments against the epistemic sceptic. I hope, however, that enough difficulties have emerged with such arguments, in the course of my detailed discussions, to show why this option is closed. None the less, a related worry needs to be addressed: can even the modest types of argument I have proposed be used in a way that avoids the standard objections, that is, can they be constructed without making any appeal to verificationism, idealism, or problematic modal notions? Now, I hope to have shown that our choice of sceptical target enables us to avoid the first two: to answer the normativist justificatory sceptic, we are not required to go beyond claims about our experiences, beliefs, and concepts, so we do not need to use verificationism or idealism in the way that is required by more ambitious transcendental arguments. It is not possible to 'finesse' the third, modal issue in this way, however, because to give up making any such modal claims would really be to give up thinking transcendentially at all, given that the basic claim involved in such arguments is that 'X is a necessary condition for the possibility of Y'. None the less, I submit that my choice of sceptical target can help here: for, while it seems dialectically inappropriate to use modal claims against the epistemic sceptic, when the grounds we have for

making such claims seem at least as vulnerable to such scepticism as the empirical grounds that these claims are supposed to replace, there is less dialectical incongruity in this respect *vis-à-vis* the normativist justificatory sceptic. For the latter sceptic merely asks that, in making some judgement, we show that the judgement relates appropriately to our doxastic norms, where in previous chapters we have adopted transcendental arguments to establish this in various ways; but then, to satisfy this sceptic on the modal issue, all we need to do is to show this sceptic that our modal claims *themselves* have conformed to such norms. Now, with regard to modal beliefs, and a priori judgements generally, it is clear that such norms involve appeals to self-evidence, conceivability, and the like; and there is no reason to think that the modal claims made previously fail to conform to such norms in this way.

A second kind of doubt follows from this, however, namely, even if the experiment was needed, and even if it avoids the objections raised against previous ways of using transcendental arguments, is the manner in which we have ended up using them of any *philosophical* value? How one feels about this will depend on how high one's hopes were at the outset. As I tried to show in Chapter i, if one's hope in 'answering the sceptic' is to take a final step in the 'quest for certainty', or to ground the reliability of our belief-forming methods, then my approach has admittedly stopped short, so that from these standpoints the answer I have given to scepticism will appear seriously incomplete. However, my aim in Chapter i was to bring out that the normativist sceptic poses a challenge that is *independent* of these other forms of scepticism, which also requires an answer, whether or not one also takes epistemic or reliabilist scepticism seriously (which, as we also saw in Chapter i, we are not obliged to do, if we reject the accounts of knowledge or justification on which these forms of scepticism depend). Admittedly, normativist scepticism may appear more tractable than these other forms, and so transcendental arguments can be more easily used against it, as the 'burden of proof is lower; but this relative weakness of the sceptic's position makes it even more (not less) important that we answer it, as failure here against such a modest form of scepticism really would leave us looking vulnerable. In dealing with the normativist objection, therefore, it appears that transcendental arguments can do valuable work, work that will always be worth while, whatever *else* one takes a complete 'answer to scepticism' to involve.

A third kind of doubt concerns the interpretative claims I have made, and the readings I have offered of certain key transcendental arguments from the canon. Here, the experiment has been to see how much from these classic arguments can be retained, once the focus on epistemic scepticism is abandoned, and with it the need for any ambitious, truth-directed transcendental arguments. Now, the results of this experiment have admittedly been revisionary to some degree, as Kant, Strawson, and others *may* have thought that they had an answer to the epistemic sceptic, and many have certainly interpreted them this way; but they did not succeed in providing this answer. What I hope my experiment has shown is that where their arguments *do* succeed is in relation to the normativist justificatory sceptic; and that, perhaps surprisingly, when their central claims are analysed closely, the actual focus of these arguments can often be understood in these terms. I do not want to suggest, however, that any of these arguments were constructed with exactly the distinction between types of scepticism that I have introduced in mind; but I do claim, more weakly, that *had* they been so constructed, they would have addressed many of the issues raised by scepticism in a more successful way.

A fourth and final doubt concerns the reconstructed arguments themselves, where it may easily be felt that these are as philosophically problematic as the originals. I certainly cannot claim to have made them immune from all criticism, although I have done the best I can to foresee and answer possible objections. However, in some ways my aim has been more modest than this: namely, to find a way of thinking about and using transcendental arguments that does not make them vulnerable to a kind of critique that would seem to apply to them as a *class*. This, after all, was how the standard objections made things appear: that as a type of anti-sceptical strategy, transcendental arguments have a universal structural flaw. My primary aim has been to show that, on my more differentiated approach, no such *completely general* weakness can be found in them. Thus, though of course it may well be that particular difficulties with particular arguments remain, I hope I have shown that there is no reason *in principle* why such arguments should not be used in epistemology, and used successfully, in helping us to understand and come to grips with important sceptical problems and the concerns they raise.

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255

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INDEX

- Albritton, R. 72 ns. 4 and 6
 Allison, H. E. 158 ns. 68 and 70, 187 n. 10, 192 n. 23
 Alston, W. P. 23 n. 9, 25 n. 12, 27 ns. 14 and 15, 85 n. 24, 114-15
 Ameriks, K. 140 n. 26, 145 n. 35
 Anscombe, G. E. M. 191 ns. 18 and 19
 anti-realism 61-2, 68
 argument from analogy 34, 91, 92, 219-20, 221, 222
 Aristotle 82, 197, 214 n.
 Armstrong, D. M. 167 n. 87
 Aschenberg, R. 2 n. 3
 Audi, R. 31 n. 22, 33 n. 26, 91 n.
 Aune, B. 86 n.
 Austin, J. L. 7 n.
 Ayer, A. J. 40-1, 163, 176, 220 n. 4, 233-4
 Ayers, M. too n. 46, 167-9

 Baker, G. 74 n. 7, 75 n. 9
 Barker, S. F. 39 n.
 Beattie, J. 207
 Beck, L. W. 185
 behaviourism 74, 217, 226, 230
 Beiser, F. C. 166 n. 84
 Bennett, J. 9 n.
 Benton, R. J. 2 n. 3
 Berkeley, G. 130 n. 6
 Bilgrami, A. 75 n. to
 Bird, G. 121, 138 n. 19, 187 n. to, 204 n. 45
 Blackburn, S. 61 n. 24, 69 n.
 Blanshard, B. 193-7, 200, 210 n. 58, 211, 215
 Bonjour, L. 22, 38, 95 n. 40, 105, 211 n.
 Bradley, F. H. 194, 196, 200, 210 n. 58, 213
 brain-in-a-vat 12, 133-7
 Brandt, R. B. 32 n. 23
 Brittan, G. G. 189 n. 13
 Brueckner, A. 63 n., 137 n., 141 n. 28
 Buchdahl, G. 192 n. 23
 Bumyeat, M. 19

 Cassam, Q. to n., 46, 54-5, 62, 64, 65
 Castañeda, H-N. 2 n. 1
 causality, problem of 12, 92, 179-215, 216
 causal principle 181-5, ¹⁸⁷> '92, 202
 causal relation 188, 192, 199, 200, 202
 causal theory of reference 134
 Cavell, S. 49 n., 80 n.
 certainty 16-17, 67, 71, 73, 85, 127, 146, 166, 175, 182, 185, 188, 216, 217, 240
 Chihara, C. S. 2170.
 Chisholm, R. 26 n., 94 n. 38, 212 n.
 Christensen, D. 213 n. 63
 circularity objection 23, 25, 26, 28, 35, 36, 37, 4^o n. 36, 105, 112, 113, 114, 121-2
 Clarke, T. 4
 Coady, C. A. J. 115-16
 Cohen, S. 24 n. 11, 32 n. 23
 coherence theory of justification 96, 103-5, 108-9, 112, 179-80, 191 n. 20, 193-9, 200, 201, 203, 206, 209-15
 see also Kant, I: and coherentism
 coherence theory of truth 209-10
 Collingwood, R. G. 230
 conservatism, epistemic 104 n., 212-13
 constitutive/regulative distinction 204
 Cook, J. W. 157 n. 67, 222 n. 8
 Copernican revolution 51-3
 criterion:
 entailment conception of 72, 73-4, 217, 232-3
 good evidence conception of 72, 74-7, 218, 233
 non-inductive justification conception of 72, 77-80, 106, 224-6, 235-6

 Dancy, J. 69-70, 86 n., too, 103 n. 48, 193 n. 25
 David, M. 136 n. 16
 Davidson, D. 1, 2, 12, 43, 50 n. 11, 105, 116-19, 216, 221, 226-8, 230

- Descartes, R. 4 n. 5, 18, 58, 101 n., 126-8, 133, 145, 146, 147, *i*_{49>}, 159 n. 71, 165 n.
- direct realism 96-9, 161, 162
- Ducasse, C. J. 191 n. 18
- Engstrom, S. 145 n. 35
- Evans, G. 236
- Ewing, A. C. 53 n. 14, 193-4, 200, 206, 211
- externalism:
 as theory of justification, *see*
 justification, accounts of:
 externalist reliabilism
 as theory of mental content 47, 63 n., 70-t, 137, 227
- external world, problem of 12, 34, 35, 67, 68, 75 n. 10, 80 n., 92, 100, 103, 107, 126-78, 216
- First Analogy 138, 140, 142, 152, 155, 156
- Firth, R. 31 n. 21
- Fodor, J. A. 217 n.
- Fogelin, R. J. 30
- Foley, R. 22 n. 6, 24 n. 11, 119 n. 69
- Förster, E. 141 n. 29, 159 n. 72
- Forster, M. N. 164 n. 81, 172 n. 97
- Foster, J. 41 n. 40
- Fourth Paralogism 149-50, 151 n. 50, 155, 159
- Fumerton, R. 15 n. 2, 127
- Gardner, S. 49 n., 50 n. 12, 151 n. 50, 223 n. 9
- Gehler, J. 101 n.
- Goldman, A. 22 n. 7, 23 n. 8
- Grayling, A. C. 64, 81, 84 n. 22, 86-7, 96 n. 41, 109-10, 112 n., 141 n. 29
- Greco, J. 24 n. 11
- Guyer, P. 52, 161 n. 76, 203 n., 208-9
- Hacker, P. M. S. 89 n., 223 n. 9, 237 n.
- Hamann, J. G. 148 n. 41, 166 n. 84
- Hamlyn, D. W. 232
- Harman, G. 213 n. 62
- Harre', R. 191 n. 18
- Harrison, R. 52-7
- Hegel, G. W. F. 126, 164-75, 176
- Hookway, C. J. 7 n.
- Hume, D.:
 and Kant, *see* Kant, I: and Hume
 and naturalism 18, 108, no, 175
 and problem of causality 181-2, 184-93, 199> 203, 204-9, 211-12
 and problem of external world 129-33, 144, 145, 155, 156, 161, 162, 167
 and problem of induction 37, 40
 and scepticism 5-6, 18, 147, 159, 161, 166, 175, 181-2
 see also scepticism: Humean
- idealism 46-7, 50-5, 63, 64, 86-7, 145, 150, 151, 154, 155, 159-61, 184, 185, 209, 210, 229, 239; *see also* transcendental arguments, objections to: idealism objection
- indirect realism 96-101
- indispensability of beliefs 81-3, 86 n., 204-8
- induction, problem of 36, 37-9, 120-2 186-7
- inference to the best explanation 93-4
- invulnerability, argument from 47-8, 86 n.
- Irwin, T. H. 197 n. 36
- Jacobi, F. H. 166
- justification, accounts of:
 deontological normativist 27-33, 35, 36, 38, 39 n.
 doxastic practice 26-7, 30, 35, 36, 38
 externalist reliabilist 21-4, 35, 36, 113
 negative internalist reliabilist 26, 30, 35
 positive internalist reliabilist 23-5, 29, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 113
- Kant, I.:
 and coherentism 180, 193-4, 198-9, 209, 212
 and Hume 5-6, no, 144, 147, 155, 159, 161, 175, 181-2, 184-92, 199, 204-9, 212
 and idealism 50-5, 142-54, 159-61, 184-5, 209
 and induction 120, 186-7
 and problem of causality 180-2, 185-92, 199-203
 and problem of external world 142-54, 158-9, 167, 170
 and scepticism 5-6, 158-9, 170, 175, 176, 178 n. 105, 180-2, 199-203, 241

- and Strawson, *see* Strawson: and Kant
 use of transcendental arguments 2, 3, 5, 7-10, 83, 124, 125, 135, 142-64, 170, 176, 198-203, 241
see also Copernican revolution; First Analogy; Fourth Paralogism; Refutation of Idealism; Second Analogy; Transcendental Deduction
- Kenny, A. 78
 Kitcher, Patricia 67 n., 145 n. 36, 156 n. 65, 208
 Kitcher, Philip 32 n. 24
 Klein, P. D. 87
 Kömer, S. 43 n. 3, 81 n., 83-4, 85
 Kripke, S. A. 228-9
 Kuehn, M. 148 n. 41
 Kvanvig, J. L. 32 n. 23
 Kyberg, H. E. 39 n.
- Langsam, H. 189 n. 13
 Langton, R. 184 n.
 Larvor, B. 221 n.
 Lehrer, K. 17 n.
 Leibniz, G. W. 9, 197
 Lipson, M. 141 n. 28
 Lipton, P. 37
 Lowe, E. J. 98 n.
 Lycan, W. G. 31 n. 21, 40 n. 38, 72 n. 5
- McCulloch, G. 96 n. 42, 17-7 n. 103
 McDowell, J. 4 n. 6, 97 n. 43, 163 n. 78, 223 n. 8
 McGinn, C. 60, 118 n.
 McGinn, M. 88 n. 32
 Mackie, J. L. 60 n. 21
 Madden, E. H. 191 n. 18
 Malcolm, N. 74 n. 8, 78 n. 13, 80 n.
 Mandelbaum, M. 132 n. 10
 Mander, W. J. 210 n. 58
 Melnick, A. 203 n.
 Merleau-Ponty, M. 178 n. 104
 Mill, J. S. 219-20
 Moser, P. K. 23 ns. 8 and 9
 Mulhall, S. 221-2
- Nagel, G. 208 n. 51
 Nagel, T. 60 n. 22, 136
 naturalism 1, 8, 15, 32, 39 n. ¹⁰, 108-12, 119, 132, 142, 164, 179, 188, 198, 206, 208
- Neuhouser, F. 164 n. 81
 norms 28, 29, 34, 35, 38, 90-1, 95, 98, 100, 102, 103, 108, 144, 193, 206, 210-15, 237, 240
- objectivity thesis 138-40
 Oswald, J. 207
 other minds, problem of 12, 34, 35, 63, 67, 68, 75 n. to, 80 n., 91, 92, too, 107, 216-38
- Palmer, H. 2 n. 3
 Peacocke, C. 10 n.
 Peirce, C. S. 7 n., 26 n., 87 n. 27
 Perkins, M. 98 n.
 Pinkard, T. 164 n. 81
 Pippin, R. B. 56 n., 164 n. 81, 171
 Piquet, M. 2 n. 3
 Plantinga, A. 73 n., 104 n., 223 n. 9
 Pollock, J. L. 28 n. 16, 32 n. 23
 Price, H. H. 163 n. 79
 Prichard, H. A. 28 n. 17
 Priestly, J. 207
 Principle of Non-Contradiction 82, 197
 Private Language Argument 114, 116, 228-9
 Putnam, H. 1, 2, 12, 37 n. 30, 43, tot n., 126, 133-7
- Rawls, J. 214 n.
 Realism 47, 49-58, 61-2, 86-7, 157, 184, 185, 229
 reflective equilibrium 214-15
 Refutation of Idealism 12, 126, 138, 140, 142-62, 170, 223
 Reid, T. 26 n., 207
 Rescher, N. 70 n., 143
 Riggs, W. D. 33 n. 26
 Rorty, R. 33 n. 25, 50 n. 11, 79, 80 n.
 Rosenberg, J. 123, 194 n. 27
- Sacks, M. 191 n. 20, 210 n. 58
 Salmon, W. C. 39 n.
- scepticism 1-2, 3-6, 43-5, 47-8, 49-50, 56, 59-63, 65, 67, 108, 136, 145, 178, 239-41
 Cartesian 4, 8, 137, 188, 210
 epistemic 11, 14-20, 25, 35, 36, 59-60, 66-89, 90, 93, 99, 123-5, 126, 133, 136, 137, 138, 142, 143, 145, 147, 159, 161, 162, 165, 180, 181-6, 187, 209, 210, 216, 217, 226, 232, 234, 239-41

- scepticism (*cont.*)
 Humean 6, 15, 18, 36, 144, 166, 175, 177, 211
 normativist justificatory it, 14, 20, 34-5, 36, 40-1, 48, 66, 89-112, 123-5, 126, 129-33, 144, 145.
 ¹⁴⁷⁻⁵¹, 162, 164, 166, 176, 179, 180, 187-9, ¹⁹³, 199, 202, 203, 209, 210, 211-14, 216, 218, 219-26, 235, 237-8, 239-41
 Pyrrhonist 15, 18, 30
 reliabilist justificatory 11, 14, 20, 23, 25, 35, 36, 37, 40, 66, 90, 99, 105, 112-23, 123-5, 126, 127-8, 133 n., 180, 181, 186-7, 211, 240
 see also brain-in-a-vat; causality, problem of; circularity objection; external world, problem of; other minds, problem of
 Schmitt, F. F. 21-2, 24 n. 10
 Schwyzer, H. 154 n. 59
 Searle, J. 1, 43
 Second Analogy 12, 180-92, 199-209
 Sen, P. K. 109 n. 54, 198 n.
 Shoemaker, S. 43 n. 1, 50, 72 n. 5
 76-7
 Sidgwick, H. 214 n.
 Skorpen, E. 160 n. 73
 Slote, M. A. 220 n. 4
 Snowden, P. 164 n. 80
 Solomon, R. C. 164 n. 81
 Sosa, E. 35 n., 89-90, 109 n. 54, 213
 Stern, R. 164 n. 81, 191 n. 20
 Strawson, G. 1440., 161 n. 77, 191 n. 18
 Strawson, P. F.:
 and Kant 1, 12, 43, 50, 137-40, 142, 145, 158 n. 69, 162-4, 208
 and naturalism 108-12, 142, 164, 179, 198
 and non-reliabilist accounts of justification 27 n. 14, 38-40
 objectivity argument 137-42
 and problem of external world 137-42, 162-4, 176
 and problem of induction 36-40
 and problem of other minds 216, 231-8
 and scepticism 3, 12, 38-40, 43, 47, 108-12, 126, 145, 162-4, 176, ¹⁷⁰ 198
 use of transcendental arguments 2
 43, 47, 5°, 62, 64, 64 n. 23, 108-12, 124, 126, 179, 216, 231-8, 241
 Stroud, B. 43, 44-50, 56-8, 61 n. 23, 62-6, 69, 70, 77, 86 n., 107, 108, 141, 143, 145, 155, 158 n. 70, 172 n. 97, 186
 Taylor, C. 164 n. 81, 171 n. 95, 172
 transcendental arguments:
 modal claim in 8-9, 46, 59
 nature of 6-11
 origins of term 7
 transcendental arguments, objections to:
 idealism objection 44-9, 49-58, 239
 modal objection 44, 46, 59-63, 68-9, 239-40
 verificationism objection 44, 45-9, 57, 239
 transcendental arguments, strategies:
 coherentist 92, 102-5, ¹¹², 123-4, 179-80, 198, 199-203, 205-8, 215
 foundationalist 66-71, 124, 143, 182, 216, 218, 226, 229, 233
 framework 67, 80-9, 124
 inferential 92-4, 124
 meta-level naturalist 113, 119-23, 124
 modest criteriological 92, 105-7, ¹¹², 123-4, 216, 224-7
 naturalist 92, 107-12, 124, 141-2, 162, 164, 179, 198, 205-8
 phenomenological 92, 95-102, 112, 123-4, ¹⁴⁴, 175, 176, 179, 221-4
 reliabilist 113-9, 124
 strong criteriological 66-7, 72-80, 124, 217
 transcendental arguments, types of:
 belief-directed 10, 12, 48, 57, 64, 66, 91, 104, 108, 112, 121, 123-5, 179, 198, 216
 concept-directed to, 11, 12, 48, 64, 66, 79, 81, 107, 123-5, 216, 226, 234-7
 experience-directed to, 11, 12, 48, 57, 64, 66, 101-2, 123-5, ¹⁴⁴, ¹⁴⁵ 162, 179, 191, 223
 modest 48, 64-5, 66, 67, 71, 73, 79, 80-1, 84, 93, 102, 104, 107, 112, 113, 119, 121, 158, 165, 172 n. 97, 216, 237, 239-41
 truth-directed 10, 12, 48, 58, 63, 66-71, 73, 76, 79, 81, 84, 107, 119, 123-5, 142, 143, 145, 165, 186, 218, 233-4, 239, 241
 world-directed 10 n.

- Transcendental Deduction 12, 138,
140, 145, 152, 193
Trendelenburg, F. A. 53 n. 14
- Valberg, J. J. 109 n. 54
Van Cleve, J. 90 n. 35, 96 n. 41, 185-6
van Inwagen, P. 114
verificationism 45-6, 63, 64; *see also*
transcendental arguments,
objections to: verificationism
objection
Vogel, J. 147 n. 40
- Walker, R. C. S. 64, 120-2, 141 n. 28,
142-3, 156-8, 187, 209-10
Walsh, W. H. 150 n. 48, 189 n. 13,
192
Waxman, W. 205-6
- Weintraub, R. 15 n. 2, 18 n., 40 n. 35>
67 n.
Westphal, K. R. 52 n., 55 n. 18,
164 n. 81, 166 n. 85
Wilkerson, T. E. 93-4, 141
Williams, B. 50, 58 n.
Williams, M. 15 n. 2, 49 n., 89 n. 33,
109 n. 54
Wilson, M. 145 n. 36, 155 n. 60
Wittgenstein, L. 26 n., 43, 72, 80 n.,
82, 86 n., 87-8, 109, 114, 116, 218,
222 n. 7, 228-9
Wolff, R. P. 148 n. 41
Wright, C. 15 n. 2, 62, 88 n. 32, 225 n.
11
- Zagzebski, L. T. 31 n. 20
Ziff, P. 220 n. 4